

THE SHAKERITE

VOL. 88 ISSUE II FEB. 8, 2018



ON THE COVER



Students Greet New ID Policy With Skepticism, Page 14

Journalism II Reporters Ashley Sah and Hilary Shakelton look at student reaction to the high school's new policy making ID display mandatory for all students. The policy, implemented Jan. 22, has recieved pushback from students. Principal Jonathan Kuehnle calls the move an effort to ensure student safety and wellbeing.

GUEST 'RITER



Rose Feldman

Why High School Dating Sucks, Page 58

Rose Feldman is a senior viola player and art club member who loves to write and draw in her free time. For her AP Composition class, Feldman was assigned to write a column about high school dating, a topic she is passionate about. Feldman said, "It's about time somebody said something about it."

THE EDITORIAL BOARD



The Editorial Board governs Shakerite opinion coverage, writes 'Rite Idea editorials and serves as a guiding force for The Shakerite on policy and practice. The Board includes (left to right, back to front): Zachary Nosanchuk, Julia Barragate, DC Benincasa, Grace Lougheed, Emilie Evans, Greyson Turner and Emily Montenegro, who serves as chairwoman.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

A few months ago in my Computer Science class, I learned that everything is composed of ones and zeros — every single piece of information, from your credit card number to your favorite song, is digitally transmitted through a string of those two, humble numbers.

During the same months in which I became enlightened to binary code, the stress of my senior year came to a plateau in what felt like a sudden turn of events.

On a Thursday evening in December, I found out where I will be attending college.

That day, I didn't come home from school to a letter waiting for me in my mailbox, but rather a collection of ones and zeros in my email's inbox, notifying me of my acceptance.

Much like all things communicated digitally, it all felt so sudden. After months of filling out tedious applications and meeting ominous deadlines, my anxiety and the ambiguity of my future dissipated as quickly as the numeric strings of information constituting that email reached my inbox.

Since 2015, the Associated Press has been using an algorithm, known as Wordsmith, to compose these strings of information. The algorithm compiles facts and produces plainly-worded quarterly earnings stories.

I wonder, however, whether or not the same computer could analyze those facts; I wonder if it could be so smart as to compute a truth.

The formative things that I have learned in this newsroom over the past four years — the curious thrill of picking up records requests at the police department, the pride I take in never allowing an editor's draft past my desk without at least five follow-up questions attached, and my shameless tenacity in making phone call after phone call to the same person — cannot be reduced to ones and zeros.

It is in these moments — when eye contact is broken, words are fumbled and numbers are just too good to be true — that the human beats the computer, that the journalist stumbles upon someone's, or something's, truth.

I am wildly excited to continue relishing these moments for the last three months of high school, for the next four years on my college campus and for a lifetime after that — until they are replaced by ones and zeros.



Grace Lougheed
Editor in Chief

The Shakerite

Volume 88 Issue II Winter 2018

03
Editor's Note

06
Campus and City

Online P.E.

Students enrolling in \$152
online PE courses raises
equity questions



12
The New Smoking

14
Student IDs

20
Mental Health



26
Investigations

Shaker's First Class

Considering the costs and benefits of first-class
early education for all of Shaker's children

34
Opinion

Administration's overdue statements regarding Timothy
Mitchell, sexual harassment prove inadequate,
impersonal and ignorant



'Rite Idea 36

Editorial Board critiques ID policy rationale,
provides more meaningful reasoning

Meet Michele 38

Opinion Editor Emilie Evans interviews Michele,
the parakeet that lives in Room 171



Sankofa Preview

Sankofa members discuss themes of upcoming performance in light of current political climate

New Orchestra Program 48

New opportunity allows beginner musicians to integrate with high school orchestra

Private vs. Public

Raider Zone Editor DC Benincasa explores the success of private schools and the OHSA's strategy to elevate dominant private schools into tougher competition

Grace Lougheed* **Editor in Chief**
 Julia Barragate* **Print Managing Editor**
 Astrid Braun **Web Managing Editor**
 Zachary Nosanchuk* **Assignment Managing Editor**
 Alexa Jankowsky **Visuals Managing Editor**
 Maggie Spielman **Journalism Coordinator**

Ethan Bloch and Mae Nagusky
Campus and City Editors Emet Celeste-Cohen **Investigations Editor**
 Emilie Evans* and Emily Montenegro*
Opinion Editors Ainsley Snyder **Spotlight Editor** DC Benincasa* **Raider Zone Editor**

Greyson Turner* **Chief Financial Officer**
 Sam Lehman **Chief Marketing Officer**
 Ellie Vahey **Chief Outreach Officer**
 Abigail Aronoff **Copy Chief**
 Andrew Mohar **In-Class Copy Editor**
 Quinn Cutri and Emily Boardman **Assistant Copy Editors**
 Kay Petrovic **Photo Editor**
 Camille Lamb Caroline Walsh **Photographers**
 Natalie Sekicky **Adviser**

*Denotes editorial board member. The Volume 88 editorial board chairwoman is Emily Montenegro. The Shakerite reserves the right to reject or edit any letter to the editor.

Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in The Shakerite articles are those of their respective authors, and do not represent the views of The Shakerite, Shaker Heights High School or the Shaker Heights City School District. The "Rite Idea" presents the views of the editorial board; however, it may not reflect the opinion of the entire Shakerite staff. The Shakerite is a public forum published for and by students of Shaker Heights High School. Readers may reach The Shakerite by emailing shakeriteserver@gmail.com, or contacting us through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. The Shakerite is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association and the Columbia Scholastic Press association.

Freeing Up Your Schedule Isn't Free

Students paid thousands of dollars for online classes in the past four years to meet physical education requirements

Mae Nagusky *Campus and City Editor*

While one student sprints down the field to score a goal, another is lying in bed with a bag of chips at 9 p.m., logging bowling frames.

While one student drips sweat at 7 a.m. in the middle of a 225-lb. bench press, another is lying in bed with a doughnut, logging the mile jog that she may or may not have done.

And the students eating a doughnut and chips while logging their exercise are earning twice as much physical education credit as the other two.

Although the Ohio Department of Education requires 0.5 physical education credits to graduate, Shaker requires students to earn one full credit. According to the Program Planning Guide, students should take two semesters of PE during freshman year, one during sophomore year and the last semester of PE junior year. Each semester of Shaker PE is worth 0.25 credits. Each online Brigham Young University PE course is worth 0.5 credits.

"In Shaker, we try to not only meet what the



state requires, but exceed it and provide a superior educational experience," Principal Jonathan Kuehnle said.

Neighboring districts such as Orange, Mayfield Heights, Chagrin Falls, Cleveland Heights and Beachwood require students to earn 0.5 PE credits.

To meet the one-credit requirement, more Shaker students are turning to online courses such as those offered by BYU, a private school in Utah owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormon church. Shaker students are increasingly turning to the Internet to meet the PE requirement, with 125 students enrolled in online PE over the last four years.

To earn those credits online, Shaker students



Students enrolled in
BYU's online jogging
course are required to
log their daily
activity, but BYU
does not ensure that
students actually
complete the activity.
**Illustration by Liam
Braman**

have spent \$19,000 in the past four years for BYU's online independent study program. During the 2014-15 school year, 13 students enrolled in a BYU course; in the 2015-16 school year, 34 students enrolled; and in the 2016-17 school year, 52 students enrolled. Twenty-seven students have enrolled in a BYU course so far this year.

Other online PE options exist. Cuyahoga County Community College offers courses for \$313. Lincoln Learning Online charges \$276 per course, and Indiana Online's cost is \$275 per course. But BYU offers the least expensive courses at \$152 each.

Shaker students have most frequently enrolled in BYU's Walking Fitness, Fitness for Living Well, Jogging and Bowling courses.

Physical Education and Health Department Chairman Marc Enie said Shaker PE can offer students choices as well. Students pick the activity they want to do for each in-school unit. "We offer a high-intensity activity, a lower-intensity activity, and a fitness activity for each unit. Sports like touch football and basketball will have a high level of competition," he said.

"We also offer invasion games and recreational games for students who enjoy playing but with a little less intensity. We always offer a fitness option like weight training, core fitness and yoga."

"One unit we had touch football and outdoor invasion games. And then we have a walking class where [students] have pedometers," Enie said.

Enie said he wants to create a fitness-based program for students who don't want to play a sport during PE. "We would have spin cycles, treadmills and ellipticals and we would be watching and learning about heart rates and seeing what level we're working on," he said. "That's just the future where I want to go."

School counselor Eileen Blattner said that students frequently enroll in online PE because of a full class schedule.

Other options for such students include a zero period PE course. Shaker offers two zero period courses: Yoga and Mindfulness, taught by PE teachers Jill Woodard and Susan Brown, and Weight Training, taught by PE teacher John Schwartz. Each is worth 0.25 credits per semester and meets daily before school from 7-7:45 a.m.

Kuehnle said there may be more zero period options next year. "We're looking to offer a zero period basketball course next year, something students would actually be interested in and want to take," he said.

Senior class adviser Matthew Bartley ran a program last summer through Summer, Exploration, Learning and Fun that offered 0.25 PE credits.

The SELF program, offered to all upperclassmen, took place June 12-19 from 8 a.m. to noon. The program cost \$230 but was free for any student who qualifies for free or reduced lunch. According to shaker.org, SELF "addresses barriers that currently exist and focuses on equity, excellence and exploration by providing differentiated services and enrichment opportunities for all Shaker students at the elementary, middle and high school levels."

Shaker also provides independent study programs, which include interscholastic and off-campus PE options.

Interscholastic independent studies are available for students who play a Shaker sport, while off-campus independent studies are for students who participate in a sport or activity outside of school, such as ice skating or dance.

For both programs, students must complete a preseason and a postseason essay and log their activities and hours. Students then must obtain a sponsor or coach's signature to verify that they

have completed their independent study in order to earn credit.

Enie said the independent study option allows students to try new clubs and activities. "Several parents have told me they have a lot of trouble getting their kids to do something active, and the independent study motivates them to try new things."

Superintendent Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr. said a part of the district's Five-Year Strategic Plan is to provide students with a variety of options, as well as nontraditional ways, of obtaining credit.

"A part of our strategic plan was to remove barriers of students who might not have the financial means to have access to all of these things, that the school provides this to everyone," he said.

Hutchings formed an Equity Task Force to focus on removing barriers to student success and helping children of all races and life experiences achieve at high levels.

Neither the district nor BYU offers students financial support for the programs. In Shaker's case, because students can enroll in a PE class before or during the school day or pursue Shaker's independent study program for free, no subsidy is offered.

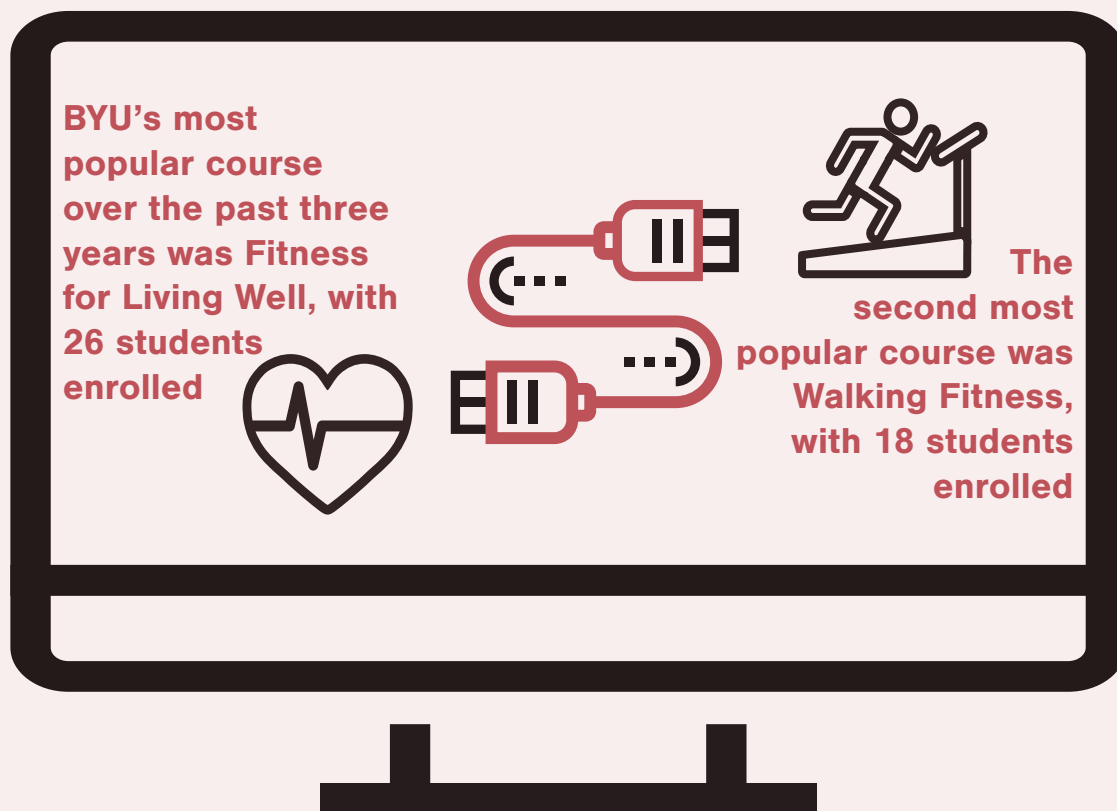
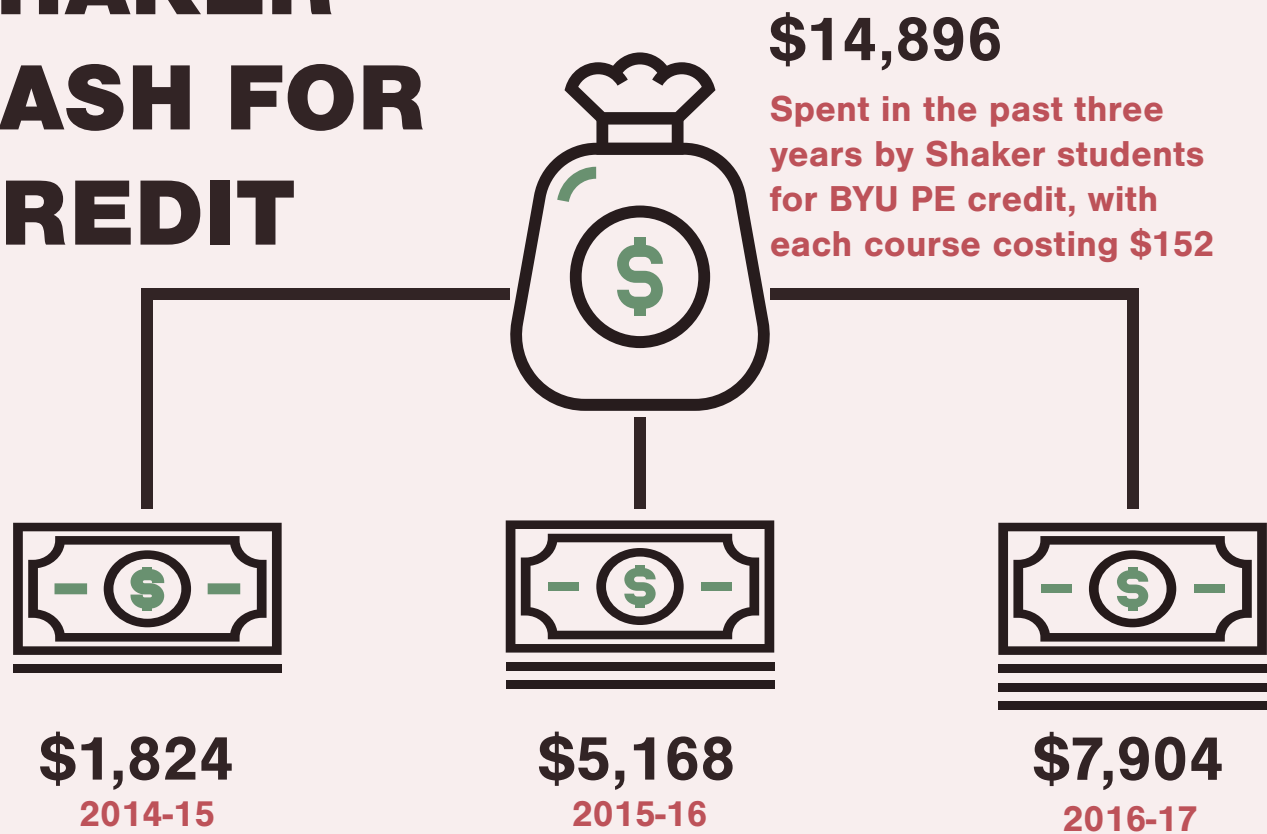
"If someone chooses they would like to get [their PE credit] out of the way, that's where they can take the online course. But since we offer it for the price of your tax dollars, we don't subsidize the courses that you choose to take on your own," Kuehnle said.

In addition to inequitable access due to cost, online PE courses may also lack integrity because they allow students to fabricate their exercise reports without consequences.

The BYU option requires students to log their activity daily. Students take multiple-choice unit quizzes that are open-note and untimed. The final exam includes 50 computer-graded questions and accounts for 25 percent of the course grade. Neither Shaker nor BYU ensures that students actually perform the activity they log online.

Senior Ben Stager is enrolled in the BYU online Jogging course. He said it would be very easy to cheat the system and get credit when it isn't deserved. "I think it's completely ridiculous - you're paying for an online logger to check that you did your running," he said.

BYU GETS SHAKER CASH FOR CREDIT





Senior Daniel Crouse back squats during zero period Weight Training Jan. 25. Thirty people are currently enrolled in the class.

Photo by Kay Petrovic

had to take the quizzes and upload the scorecards. I could have done it all in one sitting, but I chose not to," he said.

Another equity concern emerges when considering cheerleaders. While athletes can earn interscholastic independent study PE credit, cheerleaders cannot earn PE credit independently or otherwise.

Raiderettes, by contrast, can earn PE credit because they practice during the school day.

Raiderettes are a selective dance team associated with the marching band. They are considered part of the band and perform with it at football games. Raiderettes start their season two weeks before school starts and practice every day during first period. If they choose to take PE during first

Senior Chris Richardson, who is enrolled in BYU's online Standard Golf course said he didn't spend much time on the site. "I just

period after the football season ends, they can earn 0.25 credits. "Students can do nine weeks of Raiderettes and then nine weeks of PE and get a semester of PE credit," Enie said.

Athletic administrative assistant Vikki Long, head cheer coach, said it would be preferable for cheerleaders to receive PE credit for their year-round work. "I don't know what would have to be in place for that to happen, but I know a lot of [cheerleaders] feel that way. A lot of them have voiced that because of the hours put in."

"Raiderettes and cheerleaders fall through the cracks with independent study because of the way it's organized. The expectation is that the independent study is done outside of school or through interscholastic athletics. Outside of school can't take place at Shaker, and interscholastic must be a sponsored sport through a state organization like OHSA. They don't fall in either of those categories," Enie said.

However, Shaker's Program Planning Guide

states Senate Bill 311 “allows school districts to adopt a policy exempting students who participate in interscholastic athletics, marching band or cheerleading for two full seasons or two years of JROTC from the physical education requirement.”

Senior Raiderette Schuyler Butze believes she and her teammates deserve PE credit. “I’m currently taking zero period Yoga and first period Weight Training, and Raiderettes was definitely a lot more challenging and more time consuming than both of these classes that give PE credit,” she said.

Raiderettes work approximately 11 hours a week during football season. Cheerleaders put in approximately seven hours a week in through the year.

Junior cheer Captain Erin Harris said cheerleaders work very hard and deserve credit. “I believe that we deserve credit so much that last year, my personal project was to make cheerleading a sport that receives PE credit,” she said.

Harris took her appeal to Kuehnle and Kuehnle told her he was going to look further into it. She said she did not receive a response. Then, she asked the athletic office and was told that cheerleaders don’t meet OHSAA requirements to be considered a sport but that if she took tumbling outside of school, for example, she would obtain PE credit.

“I don’t agree with that at all, considering that tumbling lessons cost about \$50 a month, plus you have to find transportation to go,” Harris said.

Kuehnle said he was asked last summer if he would look into the policy. “We’re taking a look at things and seeing if it’s a good fit for us,” he said.

Kuehnle said that the district is considering whether to adopt the policy allowed by Senate Bill 311 and a waiver system policy for the 2019-20 school year. The ODE accepts waivers for students who play a sport, and allows them to be excused from PE. The waiver must be signed by a coach, parent

and the athletic director.

Kuehnle said the waiver system would help those who have rigorous academic and extracurricular schedules. “It would be nice for students who are in clubs, sports or activities, taking high-level classes, because they were already being active,” he said. “So it kind of helps them out and maybe it frees up a period in their day where they can take another course that they want to take.”

If the Board of Education approves the waiver option, Shaker students would have to participate in four seasons of a sport in order to earn PE credit. Unlike the independent study system, however, students would not have to write essays or log their

hours. Students would also be required to replace PE class with another class. Independent studies allow students to replace PE class with a study hall.

Schools such as Cleveland Heights, Mayfield, Strongsville, Kenston and Springfield High School have instituted the waiver system.

Regardless of whether or not the waiver system is implemented, online courses are growing and students are searching for ways to earn their PE credit.

Peake said students need more space in their schedules because they fill up quickly. “If you are in band or language, that fills up your two elective periods. And

if you have another interest, like art, then that fills up all of your elective periods,” he said.

“That’s a decent percentage, between band, choir and orchestra, that’s probably 600 students, so sometimes it is difficult to fit into their schedule.”

While the online route is convenient and accommodates academic goals, Enie said physical education is crucial for students’ daily life.

He said, “There’s more and more evidence of how important it is for your body and your brain to be physically active, and that’s why Shaker believes in above the state minimum for PE credit.”

**“There’s more
and more
evidence of how
important it is
for your body and
your brain to be
physically active.”**

**Marc Enie
PE and Health
Department Chairman**

The New Smoking

Avery Blaszak
Journalism II Reporter

Since the invention of the electronic cigarette in 2003, high school students have increasingly used vaporizers, more commonly known as vapes, instead of tobacco cigarettes.

Vaporizers are battery-powered devices that heat a liquid solution, usually containing propylene glycol, glycerin and nicotine, that can be inhaled as a vaporized form of nicotine.

“I think it’s like, if you do it, you’re cool, and if you don’t, you’re not cool – or you’ll be peer pressured into doing it anyways,” freshman Carson Fowler said.

As of 2016, twice as many teens vape than smoke, according to Science News for Students. Additionally, in 2015, in part with the National Youth Tobacco Survey, researchers found that 16 percent of teens vape, which adds up to 2.39 million teens in comparison to the 1.37 million high school teens who smoked cigarettes.

As more consumers begin to follow the vaping fad, the industry has made vaporizers smaller and more attractive. One vaporizer, known as a “JUUL,” looks similar to a flash drive and is fairly attainable for students. The JUUL is USB chargeable, which allows students to easily charge them in their computers at school.

According to the company website, the mission of JUUL Labs is to eliminate combustible cigarettes and provide smok-



In 2015, one in four high school students used some form of tobacco products, which includes e-cigarettes.

According to the 2017 Monitoring the Future survey, one in three seniors have reported past use of a vaping device.

A study in January 2016 found that kids who vape are three times more likely to begin smoking regular cigarettes than nonvapers.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, boys are two times more likely to use e-cigarettes than girls.

ers with an alternative to cigarettes that can assist them in their attempts to quit.

Though JUUL Labs have tried to combat underage use by making the site only accessible to people who confirm they are 21 years or older, the JUUL has become more popular than classic vaporizers in high schools due to its sleek look and small size.

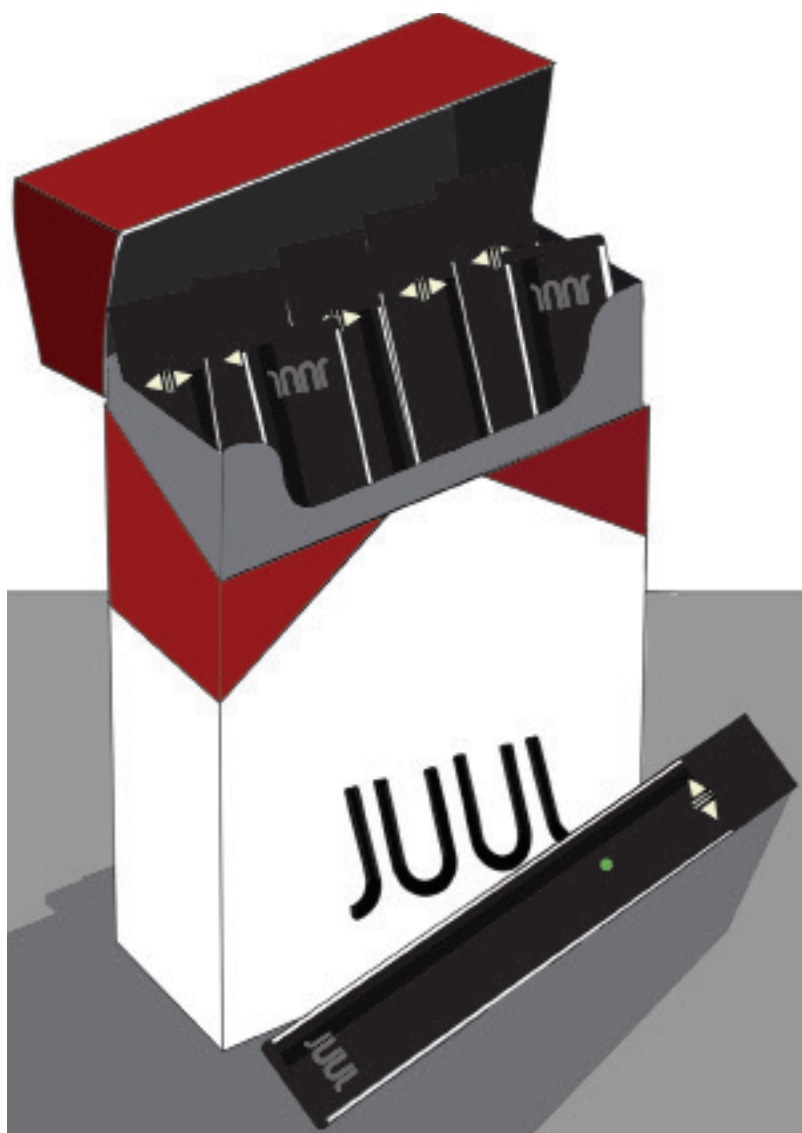
Vaporizers are healthier than tobacco cigarettes, which pose health risks due to smoke inhalation, but vaporizers and electronic cigarettes still have negative consequences for students’ health.

One JUUL pod, or the cartridge in which the liquid solution is stored, contains 0.7 mL of liquid with five percent nicotine by weight, which is roughly equivalent to a pack of cigarettes, or 200 puffs.

Dr. Eleni Pelecanos-Matts, a primary care physician at Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Administration Medical Center, explained that nicotine affects teenagers differently than it does adults. “Nicotine has profound addiction-promoting effects on the brain, and the developing brain is more susceptible to these effects than the fully developed brain,” she said.

Students can develop a nicotine addiction from consistent use of a vaporizer, Pelecanos-Matts warned. “Nicotine causes one to feel a short-term sense of pleasure and it promotes release of adrenaline, which can make one feel a bit more energized. It can cause dependency,” she said.

Compared to alcohol, Pelecanos-Matts said, vaporizers affect the body differently, but both cause addiction and dependency if consumed regularly. “Given what is currently understood about nicotine addiction, I am concerned that vaping could increase one’s risk for dependency on other addictive drugs,” she said.



Alexa Jankowsky

Studies reveal that nicotine use starting at a young age leads to nicotine addiction. “Epidemiologic studies indicate that people who start using nicotine products in their teen years are much more likely to become addicted than those who start as adults,” Pelecanos-Matts said.

However, nicotine isn’t the only aspect of vaping that worries medical professionals. According to Pelecanos-Matts, concerns about vaping include the unknown effects of the substances used in producing the vapor and the delivery devices that are used.

According to the online student handbook, use of electronic cigarettes is prohibited. “The Board prohibits the smoking, use or possession of tobacco in any form including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, clove cigarettes,

chewing tobacco, snuff, alternative nicotine products, electronic cigarettes and any other forms of tobacco by any student in any area or vehicle under the control of the District or at any activity supervised by any school within the District,” the handbook states.

The school’s policy complies with state and federal laws. While the minimum age to purchase tobacco varies by state, JUUL Labs enacted a policy in August to prohibit anyone under 21 from purchasing their products via their website.

State laws set the minimum age for purchase of vaporizers anywhere from 18 years to 21 years of age. In Ohio, people 18 years old and older with a valid ID can legally buy tobacco products, including vaporizers.

Students explained that Ohio’s law makes it easy for underage students to acquire the popular devices. “You can basically get them from any store as long as you have a senior by you,” Fowler said.

“It’s popular with a lot of upperclassmen, but I also think a lot of upperclassmen are introducing it to freshmen,” junior Isabel Levin said. “If someone has one, they’ll offer it to their friends, and then they try it, and they like it and want to do it, too.”

Levin also said the high school’s new policy of testing for alcohol at school dances has increased student use of the smoking alternative. “Now that they Breathalyze at school dances, you can sneak in a vape, so that’s appealing,” Levin said.

“I think that it’s a trend now, and it’s caught on.”

The anonymous student said, “I one hundred percent believe JUULing and vaping is the new smoking of our generation.”



Astrid Braun

Students Greet New ID Policy With Skepticism

Ashley Sah and Hilary Shakelton
Journalism II Reporters

Students have been reluctant to follow a new policy implemented Jan. 22 that requires them to wear their student IDs at all times.

"I didn't really see a need for it, because we've been able to get through school just fine," freshman Jacqueline Johnson said. "They ask for your ID tag, and you pull it out."

Asked to explain why the policy was enacted, Principal Jonathan Kuehnle said that the policy is primarily a security measure and referenced recent violence in U.S. schools.

"We've had two school shootings this week — one in Texas and one in Kentucky — two days ago. Those are tragic, and while IDs won't prevent everything, they are definitely a step to make the school as secure as we can possibly make it," he said.

Kuehnle added that the policy is "one part of a set of comprehensive security measures."

Wearing IDs can help determine whether intruders are present. "There was an issue for a semester that there were some people that were here that didn't belong, and it's hard to point them out," math teacher Lori White said.

According to Kuehnle, if every student wears their ID at all times, it will be easy

for security to identify an intruder who is not wearing an ID.

"No one security guard can possibly know all 1,600 students. And so, it's really a way to encourage more positive relationships and interactions with students and security guards," he said.

"People know who we are," sophomore Alexa Range said. "All the security guards know me, so I don't see a point in it."

Freshman Andrea Harrison questioned the policy, "What's the point of wearing them during class? I understand if we need them to check out books or stuff like that, but why do we need to wear them the whole day around our necks?"

Kuehnle first sent a robocall to Shaker families Dec. 22 notifying them of the new policy, which began on the first day of second semester.

In an email to high school staff, Dean of Students Greg Zannelli stated that the policy is designed "to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of everyone at SHHS."

Zannelli also said the IDs would make it "easier and quicker" to buy lunch, check out library books, purchase tickets to dances, enter sporting events, ride the RTA, receive late passes and interact with security guards in the building.

"I have not been wearing it because it was messing up my outfit, and honestly there's no point in wearing it," freshman Hannah Moore said. "I understand they want us to wear it so they can know we go to the school, but I feel like as long as we have it on us, and they just ask to see it, that can be fine, too."

Senior Ethan Vodrey, however, does not object to the policy. "It's easier to just wear it than to just rebel. It's not that much of a hassle," he said.

White agreed. "Any business that you go into will require their employees to wear IDs," she said. "I don't think it's an



According to high school administrators, there were two incidents involving a weapon and police at Shaker Heights High School so far this school year. In the first, a male juvenile suspected of possessing a weapon ran from the school Sept. 12. The juvenile was later taken into police custody. No weapon was found. In the second incident, police discovered a loaded handgun in a student's locker Oct. 23 when they arrested him at school in suspicion of an off-campus offense.

unreasonable request."

Math teacher Raymond Durban said his students are not in favor of the new policy. "I teach mostly seniors, and they're really against it. I tell them it's no burden and it's for their own personal benefit," he said. "It's really a safety issue, and I'm in favor of everyone wearing them."

Students received IDs and red lanyards during a Jan. 22 advisory period. Students must wear a lanyard around their neck which displays their ID.

A colored dot on the ID indicates the lunch period the student is in, and the color of the box around the student's picture indicates grade level.

If students lose their ID, they should see administrative assistant Martina Middlebrooks in Room 106 after school to get a new ID at a cost of \$3.

Advisory teachers explained that anyone who has problems with the name on their ID tag should see Zannelli to have it changed during lunch or after school.

According to Zannelli, students who refuse to display an ID will be referred to the dean of students or an assistant principal for "appropriate consequences."

Asked what consequences will be implemented, Kuehnle said, "Right now we're not even focusing on consequences as we are [on] incentives. That's because the whole goal of this is to make this as safe a campus as possible for everybody."

Despite incentives, students are skeptical of the policy. According to Durban, "A lot of the kids have already complained to me that we won't enforce it."

Sophomore Dakota Cochran said, "Anything can happen to it. There is never going to be a day where everyone wears their ID."

Investigations Editor Emet Celeste-Cohen contributed reporting

Making Shaker a Safer Space

Bailey Pasternak
Journalism II Reporter

Around the school, stickers hang on walls and doors reading, “This is a safe space.”

But safe for what?

Safe spaces are generally defined by dictionaries as “a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm.”

While safe space stickers are not new to high schools, discussion regarding the meaning of those stickers is.

The high school Gender and Sexualities Alliance, previously known as the Gay Straight Alliance, distributes safe space stickers to teachers and campaigns to curb homophobic language at school.

Junior Tristan Murphy, a GSA member, provided a definition for safe spaces: “A place that a human can feel protected at all costs no matter in what way they express themselves in terms of appearance, behavior — although inappropriate behavior will always be condemned — and speech.”

Senior GSA President Sarah Grube said Shaker has grown more accepting over time.

“I’d argue that Shaker is more accepting of student expression of identity, culture and belief than it was, say, in the 1950’s, or even in the ’80s,” she said. “There is a long, long road ahead of us, and Shaker continues to struggle with



In 1998, a male athlete at the high school encouraged students to attend an upcoming lacrosse game against all-male University School, promising Shaker would “send those Prepper fairies home crying.” The Gay Straight Alliance was founded soon after, in response to LGBTQ+ students’ requests for a safe space. The club received support from administration, but initially encountered opposition from students and parents. About 35 students attended the first meeting, and the club has met weekly ever since.

community-wide acceptance and tolerance of all students’ racial, gender, sexual and religious identities.”

Choir teacher Mario Clopton, Special Education Department Chairwoman Dr. Stacey Steggert, science teacher Evan Zuzik, nurse Paula Damm, school counselor Elizabeth Vokes and school psychologist Sagar Patel have received training from GLSEN, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network. They are providing professional development to faculty on LGBTQ+ students.

“This initiative was developed after high school faculty members decided that more training and discussion on the language and needs for LGBTQ students and staff were needed district wide,” Clopton wrote in an email interview.

Clopton said this group has affected other staff. “The results of this training have positively impacted staff and faculty awareness of the needs of LGBTQ students. Staff have developed and continue to better understand the acronym LGBTQ, what each letter means and why it matters to know what the definitions are,” he wrote.

Like Grube, Clopton believes that “the work of building a safe community is perpetual, never ending, ever evolving with the issues of the day.”

Senior Mark Hall defines a safe space as “a place where you don’t have to be cautious. You don’t have to worry about others around you doing anything reckless.”

To Hall, Shaker is a safe space, “but for others, I’m not sure.”

Hall said that Shaker is accepting of student expression, but “there is a long, long road ahead of us. Some people have an issue with others’ choice. I’ve seen instances where people avoid people who



Astrid Braun

they assume are gay. I've seen people bash people and call them needless and unnecessary names."

Murphy echoed this idea. "The school says they have become more accepting," she said, but not everyone is benefiting from that claim. Murphy said she knows people who have experienced intolerance.

"My good friend has been blatantly called the wrong [birth name] by teachers that have taught him for a whole school year," she said.

"Other times a substitute teacher refused to honor his wish of preferred name and pronouns."

Making sure students' names and chosen pronouns are used by teachers and substitutes is a challenge because state law requires that students be identified in the online attendance program by their given, legal names. Therefore, teachers cannot change students' names in ProgressBook. When substitute teachers take over, they read names listed on the attendance screen or listed on a document printed

from the software.

Nationally, there is dispute over whether safe spaces contradict the First Amendment. The argument is that safe spaces infringe on the right to express any opinion. In reality however, especially in high school, the First Amendment does not offer unlimited protection of speech.

Grube believes that safe spaces, in Shaker at least, do not contradict the First Amendment. "This is not a government giving a list of words that are not allowed to be used, or opinions that cannot be stated aloud.

"Rather, it is students and teachers agreeing on the way in which sensitive discussions will be held in a space they control," she said.

Murphy agrees that safe spaces do not contradict the First Amendment because they do not ban opinions, only hateful expression of them.

"A safe space is to allow expression and the overall safety of one's emotional health because not all humans can ignore, for lack of better word, hate," she said. "Opposition to another's viewpoint is OK to state but with utmost care, concern and respect for the other people in that particular setting."

Grube emphasized that safe spaces must protect respectful students who disagree.

"If any conservative students have been made to feel unsafe or discriminated against for respectfully sharing their beliefs on certain topics and issues, that would obviously be a cause for concern," she said.

Clopton said that Shaker is not yet a safe space, even though the school has become more accepting of students' expression. He stated, "We are working on making the school a place where all students are and feel safe and are treated with dignity and respect."

Sitting or Standing, Students Approve of New Furnishings

Danielle Krantz and Isaac Van Orman
Journalism II Reporters

For years, classroom furniture has been synonymous with sturdy wooden or plastic chairs, but a recent test run of flexible furniture at the high school aims to add variety and mobility to classroom tables and chairs.

"I like it very much. I feel like it alleviates some stress and some worries some students might have," freshman Noah Greff said.

Students and teachers in three math and art classrooms have received new furniture, including standing desks and swivel chairs.

Students and teachers alike approve of the change. "I think it's spectacular. I think my students feel more comfortable," math teacher Christine McCandless said.

"I was surprised," said Greff. "I mean, I knew it was coming, but I enjoy it. I think it gives the school a new feel."

"There are a lot more benefits to the desks that we have now, compared to the other ones that we used to have," freshman Sable Landingham said, citing the ability to fit a backpack under the chairs as a notable improvement, as well as the increased table space.

"I was surprised," Landingham said. "I didn't expect it to be that nice."

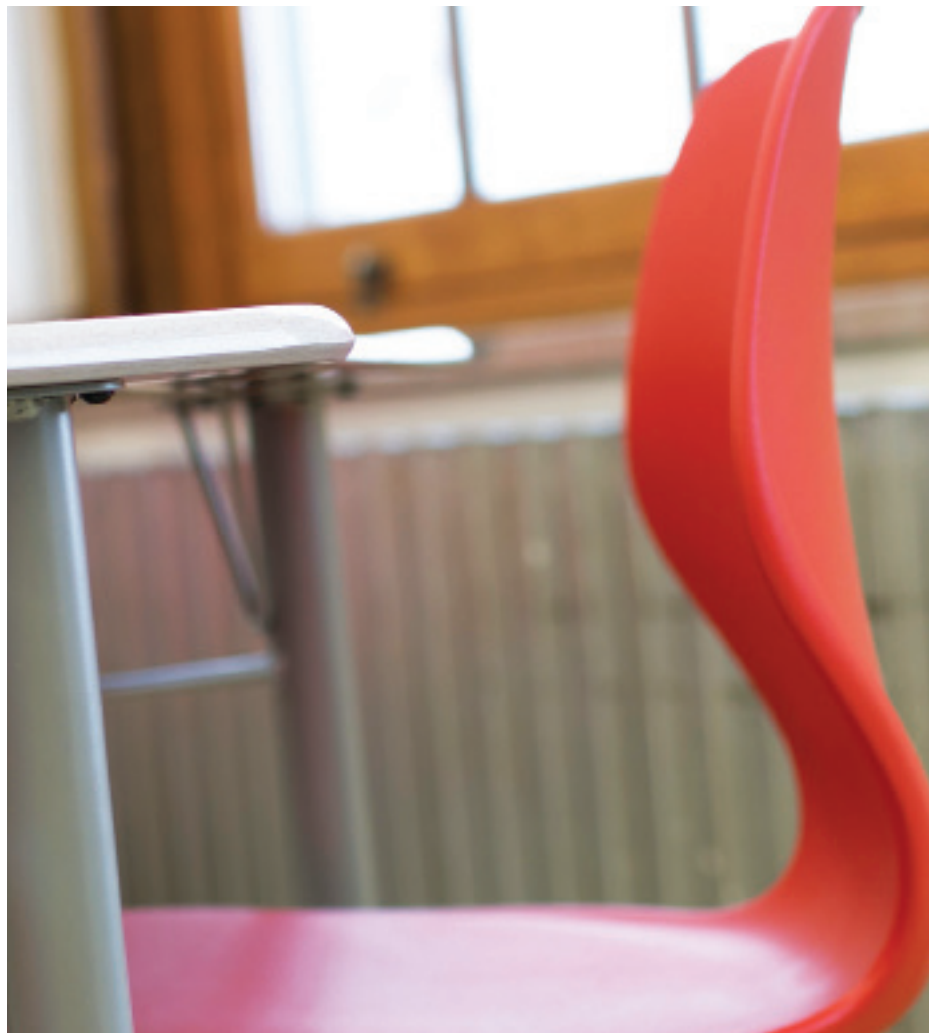
However, the furniture has drawbacks as well. "I think the chairs can be a struggle for kids who like to waste class time," said Greff, pointing to the swivel chairs as a particular temptation.

The cumbersome design of the new whiteboards also may impede their use. "The whiteboards are too large and they're really heavy and hard to flip around and maneuver, just in general. They're a little too big for the purposes that most teachers use them and I just don't like them," freshman Aine Jameson said.

The new seats require new sitting skills. "We have one type of seat that has tipped over a few times," McCandless said.

Landingham also said a student fell off of a seat. "There was this one chair like a yoga ball. [The student] was moving around on it and he fell," she said.

Nevertheless, students and teachers like the new furniture due to its comfort and accessibility. "Students of different sizes can still feel comfortable," McCandless said.



Kay Petrovic

"I really like it," said Landingham. "It's nice and comfortable because we used to have those really uncomfortable desks."

"It's a little weird," Jameson said, although she did express her satisfaction with the change.

Students also embraced the newly-installed standing desks. "I think they're really nice," said Landingham. "I mean, if you're better at learning while standing, then that's great."

Overall, much of the new furniture has been an interesting and welcome addition to the classroom for both students and teachers. Junior Lewis Fletcher said, "It's dope."

Tweeting During Science Class, Literally

Melina Ioannou

Journalism II Reporter

A parakeet named Michele keeps students company during science classes held in Room 171.

It has been a few years since Michele first came to the school, and there is some confusion about how. Jason Walker, who teaches science in Room 171, said the bird just seemed to show up.

"As far as I know, it was someone's senior project to make a cage for the parakeet, and then it was dropped off to us and has never been taken away," he said.

But Jeanne Wiemer, a science teacher who takes care of the bird, knows the story.

"It was one of my biology student's, whose mother told her she was no longer allowed to keep the bird and she wanted



According to the Board of Education's 2017-20 Capital Project Plan, flexible furniture was allocated across 10 pilot classrooms in the District - one per school and three areas in the high school (Rooms 234, 300 and 10). For the pilot alone, \$500,000 was allocated - \$50,000 per classroom. The furniture was delivered by Nov. 27 to all of the classrooms.

In a survey conducted by Onaway teacher Jim Sweeney and presented to the BOE Dec. 11, 50 percent of his students couldn't name one thing they would change about the furniture.

to give it to a good home," said Wiemer, who had an aviary from another student's senior project and offered to take care of Michele.

Wiemer also takes Michele home to her farm over the summer and buys food and supplies for the bird. She said students like to pitch in. "Everyone kind of gives her water or food if she needs it," Wiemer said.

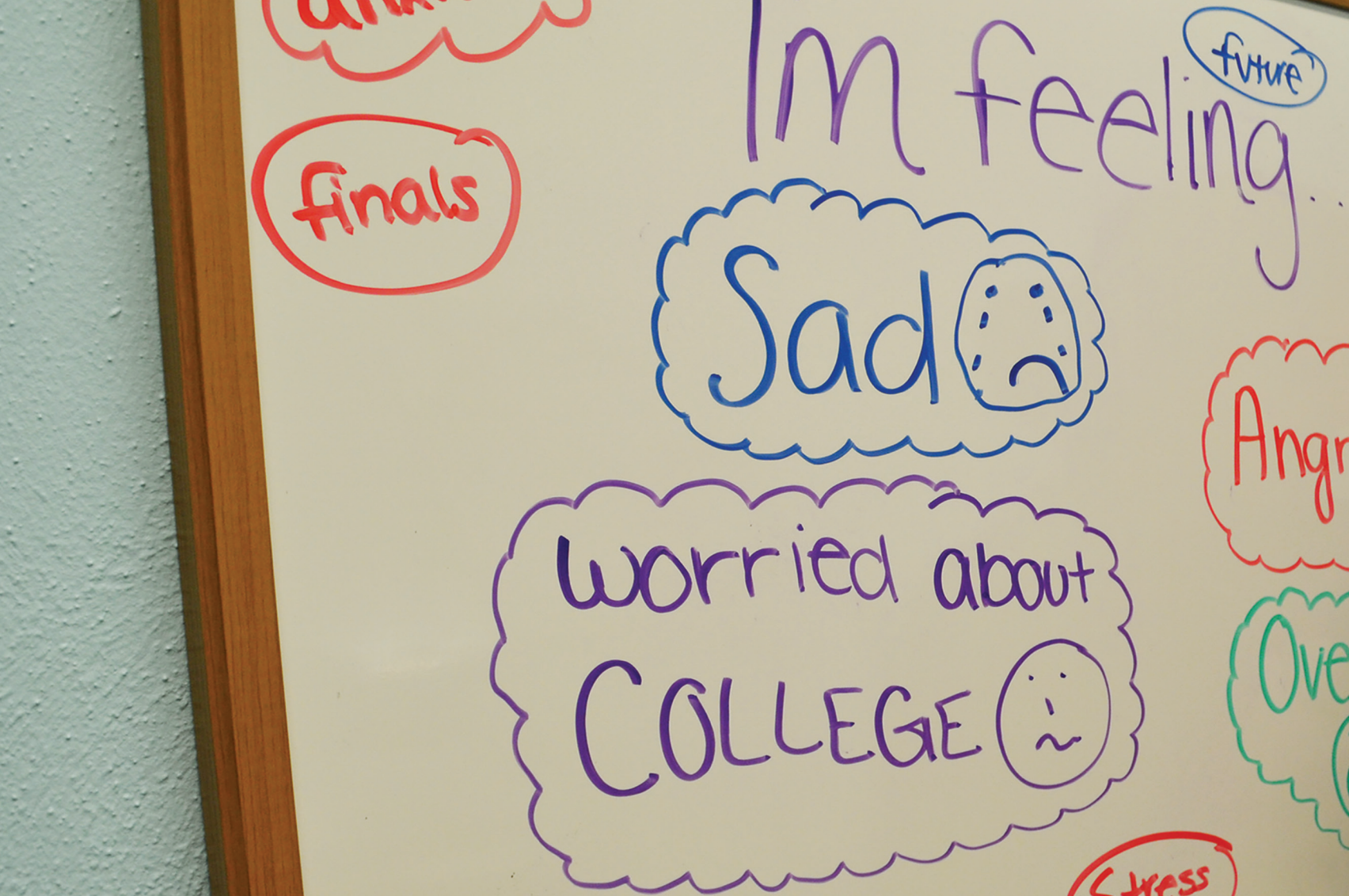
Walker believes students' opinions of Michele are divided. "It's about 50/50," he said. "Some really enjoy having it here and some get annoyed, especially during tests. Really, the only time I notice her is during a test."

Nakeem Booker, a sophomore who has a class in Room 171, said that although Michele does sing during tests sometimes, "It's not distracting."

"I have students who absolutely love her and are so happy to have her in class, but then there are some students who are annoyed by the little tweeting and stuff," Wiemer said. "I think it's a little bit of both."



Kay Petrovic



Mental Health in Hiding

The high school offers helpful services,
but conversation about emotional concerns is rare

Abigail Aronoff, Copy Chief

Editor's Note: Some sources in this story have been granted anonymity because of their comments on personal mental health concerns.

In a Sept. 15 email to faculty, Principal Jonathan Kuehnle wrote that school nurse Paula Damm had “documented an unusual surge in the number of students seeking help in the clinic for test anxiety.”

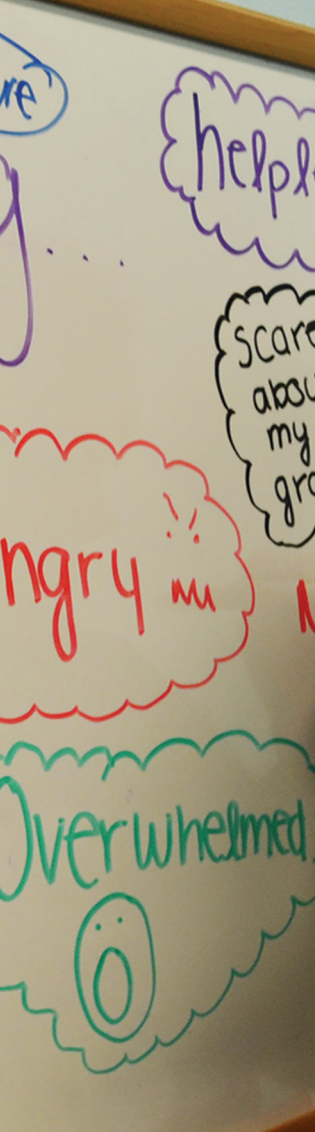
The email included a “friendly reminder” for

teachers about the high school’s flex night and test day policies.

The message was also conveyed on the P.A. announcements, amid the numerous others promoting the high school’s successful sports teams, inclusive clubs and diverse population.

Despite the principal’s message, anxiety and other mental health issues are rarely discussed at the high school.

“Shaker needs to break the stigma of mental ill-



A white board in the zen room displays feelings students have written. Photo by Kay Petrovic.

ness and normalize seeking help,” a freshman girl said.

According to the National Institutes of Health, the most common mental health disorder is anxiety, which affects approximately one-third of adolescents and adults. The condition can be debilitating.

According to Damm, while mental illness differs for each person who faces it, there are common, identifiable causes of stress and anxiety.

Damm said a culmination of influences creates the stress that students generally face. “I think that [it’s] the way the world is now, and the way communications are so instantaneous — and the way you guys are under a lot of pressure,” she said.

In her role, Damm sees students who have exhibited warning-sign behavior: Actions that al-

lude to personal suffering due to stress and anxiety. These students have been referred to her by staff.

“If a kid is found crying in a bathroom, or in crisis, or writing [something concerning] in journals . . . then the kids are generally brought to me, and I do an assessment,” Damm said. “It’s basically just asking them questions to determine what I think the next steps should be.”

If problems ensue after talking with Damm, or students need further help, Damm refers them to Nancy Schaumburg, one of two school social workers at the high school who help students cope with mental health concerns. School social workers are qualified to conduct individual and group counseling.

Schaumburg is a member of Social Advocates for Youth, a program of the Bellefaire Jewish Children’s Bureau. Bellefaire JCB is an agency that offers a variety of services for behavioral and mental

health and child development.

“I do a lot of strategizing with students because they need to be in charge. They need to be part of the solution,” said Schaumburg, who can see a student up to six times without parental consent.

Schaumburg and Damm aren’t the only ones working to ensure students’ mental health. Teachers and counselors also take part in the effort.

“Teachers know that if they find something in writing, or if they hear something, they need to let someone know right away. And they do — and they’ve saved lives,” Damm said.

English teacher Charles Kelly explained that teachers do not receive specific training in mental health but can learn to identify worrisome behaviors through staffings.

“A staffing is when the parents and individuals who have a stake in the student’s well-being meet to discuss the student’s concerns and issues,” he said. “So, sometimes the school psychologist will be there, or the counselors will be there. It’s for one individual student.”

Staffings only occur if a student has an Individualized Education Program or a 504 Plan. Students who are diagnosed with cognitive disability or a medical condition that affects their learning receive IEPs or 504 Plans, which include accommodations for their particular needs. For example, students may be granted extended time to complete assignments, receive modified assignments or take tests in environments designed to minimize stress or distraction.

Advanced Placement Biology teacher John O’Verko said he strives to become familiar with his students so that he can help them in case of a crisis. “Everybody’s an individual, and that’s where, I think, it helps to know your students,” he said. “I know that the material and the pacing of my AP class can lead to feelings of stress. I try to keep it as light as possible and always emphasize the big picture in my classroom, but of course that doesn’t always work.”

Advanced Placement U.S. History teacher Joseph Konopinski also sees the importance of building relationships with students. “It certainly helps, especially when you get to know your students, to



Seniors Emma Neil, Claire Hawk and Abigail Herbst helped remodel the zen room in 2016. Photo by Kay Petrovic

if there's a student falling asleep in your class, if there's a student who looks like they're in another place. Talk to them and make sure that they know it's OK for them to re-evaluate their priorities," she said.

However, according to school counselor David Peake, the root of students' stress does not come from interactions with teachers but from assignments or family.

Peake said that some of the students he counsels

understand their personalities, to understand what makes them laugh, what stresses them out, what they enjoy and what they dislike, and to try to frame the class in that way for them," he said.

A junior girl said that her science teacher is very accommodating to her anxiety. "In that class, we get a lot of classwork, and it seems like it could be overwhelming, but she'll sit there and she'll work with you, and it doesn't feel like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm suffocating.'"

A senior girl said that teachers could be more sensitive to student behavior that suggests a problem with anxiety.

"I think teachers need to be better at recognizing if there's a student doing other work in your class,

complain about the heavy load of homework they are given. "Just trying to manage being up until 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning," he said. "That's the primary cause."

"The second leading cause is with a family issue, and primarily with a parent," Peake said. "Number three would be issues with friends, or lack thereof — so, social issues."

Peake said that seniors come to him most often, their primary concern being the college application process. "That's definitely the biggest stressor," he said. "That's the one where students are just having a difficult time trying to keep up with work, managing applications. The feeling of, 'Am I going to get accepted? Will I get in here?'"

A senior girl interviewed said she was unsure if she would be accepted. “The school has made it seem incredibly hard to get into college, so I was really nervous about it,” she said. “But now I feel like I was stressed for nothing.”

Senior Gautam Apte said that the process was demanding, but reasonable.

“People told me to expect that it was going to be really stressful, but, I think, as long as you did a little bit every day or every week, then it was pretty manageable,” he said.

Nevertheless, he struggled to balance college applications and school work. “There are deadlines throughout the year for applications, and you kind of have to say, ‘You know what? Do I want to do this essay or do I want to fill in these questions for college on the Common App?’ ” he said.

However, Apte said that his school counselor offered great support. “My counselor walked me through a lot of the steps that might have taken me a while to figure out on my own, so that was really helpful,” he said.

Counselors have been helpful in other ways, as well. “When I had to change my classes around with my anxiety at the beginning of this year, I went to my counselor, explained the situation to him, and he was on top of it right away,” said the senior girl who noted signs of anxious students in class. “There was never a question,” she said. “All of my teachers have been really understanding.”

However, she said that classroom policies could be more accommodating to all students. “One step to decreasing the stigma that some teachers do have surrounding mental health would be to improve the classroom environment in making it easier to self-regulate, and, with that, students would just be more calm and focused,” she said.

Self-regulation is a term that describes the ability to appropriately respond to emotions. For example, calming yourself when anxious or frustrated or making yourself feel better when sad. Strategies

for self-regulation can be verbal or physical, such as clicking a pen, walking around or tapping a foot.

Nevertheless, changing the classroom doesn’t always suffice. “I think kids all need a place to go when they’re feeling overwhelmed,” Damm said. “Students with anxiety will always have a place to come in this school, or kids who are just feeling overwhelmed. You don’t have to have a diagnosis.”

This belief led to Damm’s creation of the high school’s zen room in 2011.

The space is connected to her office and was remodeled in 2016 by seniors Hana Flamm, Claire Hawk, Abigail Herbst and Emma Neil for their International Baccalaureate creativity action service project. They won a grant from the Shaker Schools Foundation to fund it.

**“I think kids
all need a place
to go when
they’re feeling
overwhelmed.”**

**Paula Damm
School Nurse**

Damm defines the zen room as a place where students can collect themselves through different activities, such as playing with fidget spinners and putty. It also helps her assess students and decide whether she should refer them for further help.

Prior to the renovation, Neil felt that the zen room did not evoke calming feelings. “I noticed that the room was really not clean and pretty depressing. The walls were white, but, over time, had accumulated a lot and were a darker grey,” she said. “I was like, ‘This room needs to be redone.’ ”

Neil explained that the focal point of their effort was the mandala they painted on one of the room’s walls.

A mandala is a Hindu and Buddhist symbol that represents the universe. “It’s supposed to be a calming thing, something that people can trace. It’s nice to look at,” Neil said.

Damm emphasized that the zen room is not a resource reserved for students who have diagnosed mental health issues.

At the same time, however, she stressed that the zen room is not to be used to avoid problems. “We try to make it so it’s not a place to escape,” she said.

The zen room's low profile is intentional. "One of the things that the Shaker [Schools] Foundation, was concerned with was that the zen room was something that kids would get out of class to do and not for the right reasons, so for that reason, we decided to not advertise it," Neil said.

"People should know it's there, but it's a fine line to tread how they use it," Neil said.

Senior Paige Campbell said she wishes she had known about the zen room earlier in her high school career. "I only learned about the zen room, maybe, last week when [someone] was telling me about it and how she goes there a lot," she said. "I was like, 'Wow, thanks for telling me this because I could use that most days when I'm sitting in class, hysterically crying over my bad test grade.'"

Damm feels that Shaker has done a superior job treating the mental health concerns of the student body compared to other schools. "I think we do a better job than most places. Talking to my peers — nurses — people don't do what we do here," she said.

But staff feel that the number of mental health personnel at the high school could be increased.

Schaumburg said that there should be more mental health staff present.

"Well, I think with 1,600 students, there's always room for improvement. I'm one person, 24 hours a week, who can't see every student. So, I'm always behind," she said.

Peake echoed her concerns.

"I'd like to see us have more mental health professionals in the building, or to have maybe more time for us to spot-check and provide some of the lighter services with students having a difficult time at home," he said.

O'Verko tries to make his class easier for his students. "I always try to warn the kids what's coming and tell the kids that it's been that way for your classmates before. You guys will get through it," he said.

However, some students point out inconsistency between adults' concern about students' well-being and their emphasis on achievement.

Campbell said that teachers and counselors put too much stress on students to join AP or IB classes and should advocate more for students to join

Honors-level classes. "I get that IB is, like, the big thing, but us Honors kids kill it, too!" she said.

"I think having the teachers really strictly follow the testing days for their subject and flex nights would help," she suggested. Each academic department is assigned days designated for testing in that subject and a "flex night" when those teachers should not assign homework. This is a long-standing practice designed to balance student workloads.

Although Shaker offers mental health programs, students may not be aware of them.

Senior Daniel Crouse also thinks that the school hasn't done much to address students' mental health concerns. However, he doesn't think it's the school's responsibility.

"I think the school really doesn't need to do much. It could have information available, but . . . if someone has, you know, any sort of mental health issues, there are other resources, and most people wouldn't be comfortable doing anything through the school, so it seems unnecessary," Crouse said. "It's really not the school's job to deal with that. It's an individual thing."

Senior Evan Jones thinks student ignorance about mental health services is a problem. "I think they should definitely advertise more because I didn't know that's a thing, and I've been here for four years," he said.

The senior girl who noted her fear about not getting into college was hospitalized for mental health concerns. She said she was approached by the social worker once after that, but seeking help would





The new look for the zen room, remodeled in 2016 for a CAS project, featuring the mandala. **Photo by Kay Petrovic**

selves very available,” she said.

The senior girl who was hospitalized suggested that the school present its mental health services during advisory. “We have advisory once a month. They tell us everything else about the school. They could have [the social worker] come talk to us and let us know that she’s there. To know that you have a professional there that could help you, I think that that would be helpful.”

mean missing instruction. “They approached me and reached out to me and let me know that they were there as a support, but I don’t really feel comfortable leaving class, missing work [and] getting behind to go talk about my problems,” she said.

“Before they did approach me, I didn’t know that there were resources like that. I knew you could approach your counselor, but your counselor is more there for college things and not how you’re feeling. It’s nice to know that if I ever were in need of a break, I could go talk to someone,” she said.

The junior girl said that the only time the school initiates talk about mental health is in health class. “And if we’re talking about it in health class, people will still act immature,” she said.

Damm said that the situation would be different if a tragedy occurred, such as the death of a student or staff member. “If there’s a crisis, we make our-

Damm explained that her goal is for everyone to feel safe at school.

“I don’t want anybody hiding, I don’t want anybody taking off or leaving the building. I want people to be safe and to go to people that they feel comfortable with,” she said.

The senior girl who wants teachers to notice signs of anxiety emphasized that students’ mental health should be prioritized above excelling in classes.

She said, “It just needs to be made clear to the student body that if you’re miserable, you’re not doing something right.”

Web Managing Editor Astrid Braun and Journalism II Reporter Nick Voyzey contributed reporting



Mobile Crisis Hotline:
216-623-6888 or text
“FLS” to 741741.

Extending the Power of Preschool

What would it cost to bring first-class early education to all of Shaker's children?

By Emet Celeste-Cohen, Investigations Editor



S

ome children are playing with blocks. Others read or listen to music. Projects and posters cover the walls. Bookshelves and tables divide the space. A constant hum of

laughter and conversation fills the rest of the room.

Rebecca Harper sits at a table with three preschoolers. They are painting portraits of their families. Harper's been teaching since 1999. Shaker's First Class has been around for two of those years.

"I like this gray paint," one of her students says.

"You like the gray? Well you are an artist," she responds. "Here, do you want to open these as well?"

In the summer of 2014, the Early Childhood Education Task Force, created in pursuit of the district's Five-Year Strategic Plan, met for the first

time. Harper attended, along with 23 other administrators, teachers and researchers.

One of their tasks was to create an inventory of preschool programs available for students in Shaker. At Shaker last year, nearly 90 percent of students entering kindergarten had some early childhood education experience, according to the district. "But the quality of preschools," said Dr. Teri Breeden, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, "varies a great deal."

"As you drive by preschools, you'll see this thing called Step Up to Quality," she continued. The Ohio Department of Education created the measure, assessing preschools on their teacher-student ratio and curriculum, among other things. It ranks schools using a five-star system.

"If you're at the Beachwood shopping center and



Onaway preschool teacher
Rebecca Harper assists a
student with her painting.
Photo by Kay Petrovic

you go down the road, you're going to see a preschool on the right hand side with four stars. You go down Lee and see one with one star," Breeden said.

The task force found that there isn't a lack of preschool seats available to Shaker residents. Students filled only 78 percent of the 421 full-day preschool seats around Shaker. But, there is a lack of quality. The DOE ranked only 62 percent of these full-day seats as high-quality. Part-day seats fared worse, with 27 percent ranked high-quality.

On average, preschools accessible to Shaker students scored 3.9 out of five stars on Ohio's Step Up to Quality scale.

So, nearly 90 percent of last year's kindergarteners went to preschool, but that isn't the full story.

"There's a test called the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment," Breeden explained. "When the

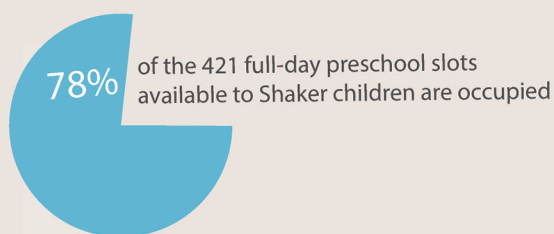
kids first come in, we test them with that. In Shaker, you'd think when the kids first come in, it'd be pretty high."

You'd be wrong. Only 55 percent of the students entering Shaker kindergarten last year scored proficient on the assessment.

White students averaged 77 percent, African-American students averaged 29 percent and students who receive free or reduced lunch — categorized as economically disadvantaged by the state — averaged 17 percent.

"One of the things that research will say is that the achievement gap is not something created by school," Breeden said. "It meets you at the school door, when you first come into kindergarten."

PRESCHOOL STATISTICS



Kindergarten Preparedness in Shaker



Shaker's First Class

22 students admitted into Shaker's First Class with \$8,000 tuition

10 students admitted on a scholarship

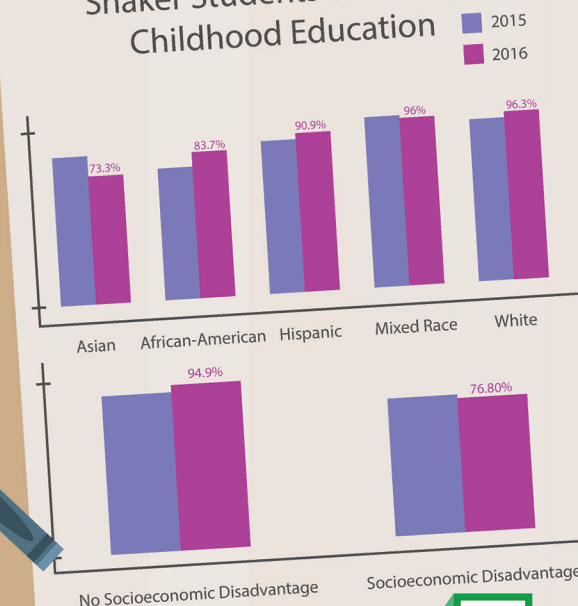
Each student costs the district \$11,000 annually (before tuition is paid)

695 3- or 4-year olds who will attend Shaker schools in the future

Universal preschool would cost the district \$7.6 million annually (before tuition is paid)

Which, split among residents, is around \$34 annually in added taxes to pay for preschool for all 695 preschool-aged students (not including startup costs)

Shaker Students with Early Childhood Education



The KRA splits kindergarten readiness into several categories: social foundations, literacy, mathematics and motor development.

In all categories, Shaker's white students scored higher than African-American students, and students with no economic disadvantage scored higher than those with economic disadvantage.

In the literacy and mathematics categories, scores of students without economic disadvantage were more than twice as high as those of disadvantaged students.

The district's shaker.org equity resource page cites a single article on the achievement gap. It covers a speech by Stanford Professor of Poverty and Inequality in Education Sean Reardon.

"A point Dr. Reardon repeatedly made during his presentation is that . . . wide gaps in test scores exist by both race and income level at third grade, and they do not change much between third and eighth grades," the article states. "Dr. Reardon said whole communities need to consider strategies that address the opportunity gaps that exist before third grade, including starting at birth, and that upper-income people and people in power may need to approach the issue with a different mind-set."

A New York Times article from December 2017 titled, "How Effective is Your School District?" also used Reardon's data. Currently, school districts are assessed on the achievement of their students. If 70 percent of Shaker students pass a state-mandated standardized test, and 50 percent of another school's students pass the same test, Shaker would be ranked as a more effective school system. In the article, Reardon presented a new metric for effectiveness: growth of students — specifically from third to eighth grade. In Reardon's analysis, districts such as Chicago Public Schools outscored many higher-income districts, with six years of growth for students over the five-year period.

Shaker ranks in the bottom sixth percentile in the same analysis. Reardon recorded 3.8 years of growth on average for Shaker students from third to eighth grade.

Dr. Kenneth Shores, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, worked with Reardon to collect the data. "The kids don't really start taking tests until

they get into third grade, so the average achievement level is only recorded from then on,” he said in a Shakerite interview. “One of the key findings is that the size of the gaps at grade three are pretty similar to the size of the gaps that we see at grade eight. So [schools’ gaps] aren’t really shrinking or growing a lot as the kids progress through school.”

Early learning, Shores continued, is where the greatest impact can be made.

Kristin Koenigsberger is another teacher for the Shaker preschool. “One of the biggest places you see the gaps here is the maturity of kids,” she said.

“Young kids are very egocentric; their world is all about them and what they know, so it’s hard for them to understand that there’s stuff that they don’t know,” Koenigsberger continued. “As you mature, you become less egocentric, hopefully, and you are more able to understand what you don’t know and why you need to learn.”

“We see a gap a lot in maturity level. Kids are still focused on themselves. They don’t want to sit because they don’t know why this lesson is important. And when they don’t sit, they start to fall behind already,” Koenigsberger said. “It’s not just sitting and listening; they want to play with the blocks in the way they want to play with the blocks. They don’t necessarily want to expand their repertoire and build a taller tower, a different tower.”

Harper said that when she gets to these students at age 3, this gap is not nearly as prominent. “It’s hard to see a gap because they’re all learning,” she said. “They’re all super young.”

“About this time in the second year, you can tell children who have not come from a high-quality preschool,” she continued. “You can tell from routine. You can tell from how they use materials and how they respond to materials.”

A student interrupts the interview. “Ms. Harper, Jackson’s foot was stuck in a blanket,” the young

girl reports.

“Did you help him?” Harper asks.

“Yes,” the student responds and returns to her cot.

Harper continued, “Every kid should have a high-quality preschool experience.”

“That means exposure to pre-academic skills,” she said. “It means learning the routines and the expectations of a school environment.”

Harper cited at least four things that distinguished low-quality from high-quality early education.

First, good teachers. “All of the teachers here have two or three degrees,” Harper said.

Also important, Harper noted, is the student-teacher ratio. “We have enough staff in the room to hit every kid where their needs are,” she continued. “We have some kids who are reading — like, really reading — and we have some students who are still struggling to identify letters. That’s perfectly OK for them.”

Second, a strong curriculum. In Shaker’s First Class, “students journal, they write,” Harper explained. “Every Monday they have to write what they did over the weekend.”

She pulls out a student’s journal. Each page allows space for a drawing and text. “She’s writing phonetically here,” Harper explains. “We took a nap” is written in the notebook as “Wi tok a nap.”

Harper points out a newer entry. “I had two Thanksgivings, one in Hawking Hills, one at home,” it read.

But work isn’t the focus in preschool. Rather, it’s pre-academic skills they stress. “The way we communicate with each other, the way we solve problems,” Onaway Principal Eric Foreman said. “All those things that, for the majority of kindergartners, that’s the first month of school: How do I ask to go to the bathroom? How do I go to the office?”

“One of the biggest places you see the gaps here is the maturity of kids.”

Kristin Koenigsberger, Preschool Teacher



A sign hangs from a preschool on Fairmont Boulevard advertising their five-star Step Up to Quality rating from the Department of Education. Photo by Emet Celeste-Cohen

These kids are getting a head start on all those soft skills.”

“Part of the soft skills include being able to sit down for story time,” Harper said. “If you have children who already know what classroom expectations are versus children who didn’t get that, then they can go into kindergarten already able to sit, focus, listen to instructions. They can process multiple levels of instruction.”

A low-quality preschool would have less structure and learning, Harper explained. It would be less of a classroom and more of a day care.

The third distinction between a high-quality and low-quality preschool education that Harper mentioned is the two-year setup. Students come in as 3-or 4-year-olds and are in the same classroom with the same teachers for two years. “You can look at re-

search that says looping — which is a teacher term — works,” Harper said. “You don’t have to start at point A. You can just look at where they were last year and start from there. I’m able to do things that they might not start until midway through kindergarten.

“The fact that we get them for two years,” she continued, “and the families are with us for two years — there’s relationships. You lessen the gap of parents who feel like they aren’t part of the community.”

That’s the fourth indicator of a high-quality preschool: a community. “We had an event where everybody brought their own dish. There were siblings there, there were nannies there — everyone within their village,” Harper said.

“You’d have one kid running around, and some adult who wasn’t their parent would say, ‘Don’t run!’ Adults would prepare food for another person’s child,” she continued. “At that point it really became a village and not just a bunch of single individuals in a classroom.”

Charged with creating this high-quality alternative to the other preschools in Shaker, the Early Childhood Education Task Force suggested the idea of Shaker's First Class.

In the fall of 2016, it came to life. Shaker repurposed two classrooms, one in Onaway and one in Mercer, for the use of the First Class. The preschool would accept students aged 3-5 for the two-year program. The requirements, according to shaker.org, were that the students be toilet-trained, families stay with the program both years and parents be

A student plays with blocks in Onaway's preschool classroom.
Photo by Kay Petrovic

available for family field trips. All 32 spots were filled. Tuition was set at \$7,000 (raised to \$8,000 the next year). Ten of the

students accepted, a number corresponding with the percent of economically disadvantaged students in the district, were given full scholarships.

That November, the preschool received a five-star ranking by the Step Up to Quality measure.

Asked if she foresaw a visible difference when these students reach middle school, Harper responded, "That's the expectation. Seriously. I think there's going to be a noticable difference even next year.

"The expectation is that by third and fourth grade you're not going to have to worry about the third-grade reading guarantee. By middle school," she continued, "as long as they get all of the right pieces and parts along the way, they should be in honors-level courses."



But there are 950 preschool-aged children in Shaker. Of them, 695 will enter the Shaker school system. Thirty-two is a start, but it's just around 4 percent.

"I think universal preschool would be phenomenal," Harper said. Universal preschool would be available to every student in a district. Available doesn't just mean that there would be 695 spots; it means it's affordable for everyone. It means every preschool-aged child in the district could attend.

"In my opinion, that's the way we're going to close the gap," she continued. "We're not going to close the gap through the likes of tutorial resources at the high school or middle school. We would be more effective, and the research says that we're more effective, if we catch kids younger. If we had the opportunity to expand, if there was more access to Shaker families, you're going to see a world of difference."

Shaker's First Class cost the district \$351,000 last year. Per student, the annual cost of preschool in the district is \$11,000. Therefore, imagining a universal preschool in Shaker providing access to all 695 students would require imagining a sum of more than \$7.6 million.

If all students without a disadvantage paid their \$8,000 tuition, the yearly cost to taxpayers would fall to \$3.9 million.

The annual cost is not all to think about. The district spent another \$44,000 on startup costs for things such as furniture, computers and classroom supplies. That adds up to another \$1 million when accommodating 695 students.

Five million dollars is a big number. If that full cost were placed on the taxpayer, it would add approximately \$22 to the local taxes for \$100,000 homes. Every year after that, it would cost around \$18 per \$100,000 home valuation. If no student paid tuition so that the entire cost fell to the taxpayer, it would cost around \$34 each year on a \$100,000 home. The new facilities plan, which passed last May, is estimated to cost taxpayers nearly \$132 annually on a \$100,000 home, but it is of fixed duration.

"The biggest limitation is space," Breeden said. "Right now, our enrollment is dropping. But to create classrooms for 300 more students – if there were 30 kids per class, that's 10 more classrooms. But you have to have a lower student-teacher ratio. So space is limiting."

Steve Wilkins, assistant superintendent of business and operations, agreed. "Most public school districts are organized for K-12 education – not PK-12. Factors such as enrollment, class hours and budgets can impact taking on this additional classroom structure," he wrote in an email.

"Creating this additional classroom space could be done via construction, leasing space or increasing other class sizes to free up a classroom in the respective buildings," he continued.

"I think this is what people in the community want," Harper said.

Bridget McCarthy is one such community member. Her daughter, Alana, is in her second year at the preschool. "I would be all for it," she said.

"I would be willing because I'm an educator and I know how important it is to have a strong preschool foundation. I would hope other community members would like to see that, to help the overall picture of the district," she continued. "There are a bunch of families that will

benefit who might otherwise have to look at centers that aren't as structured or rigorous as our schools."

"Every kid," Harper repeated, "should have a high-quality preschool experience."

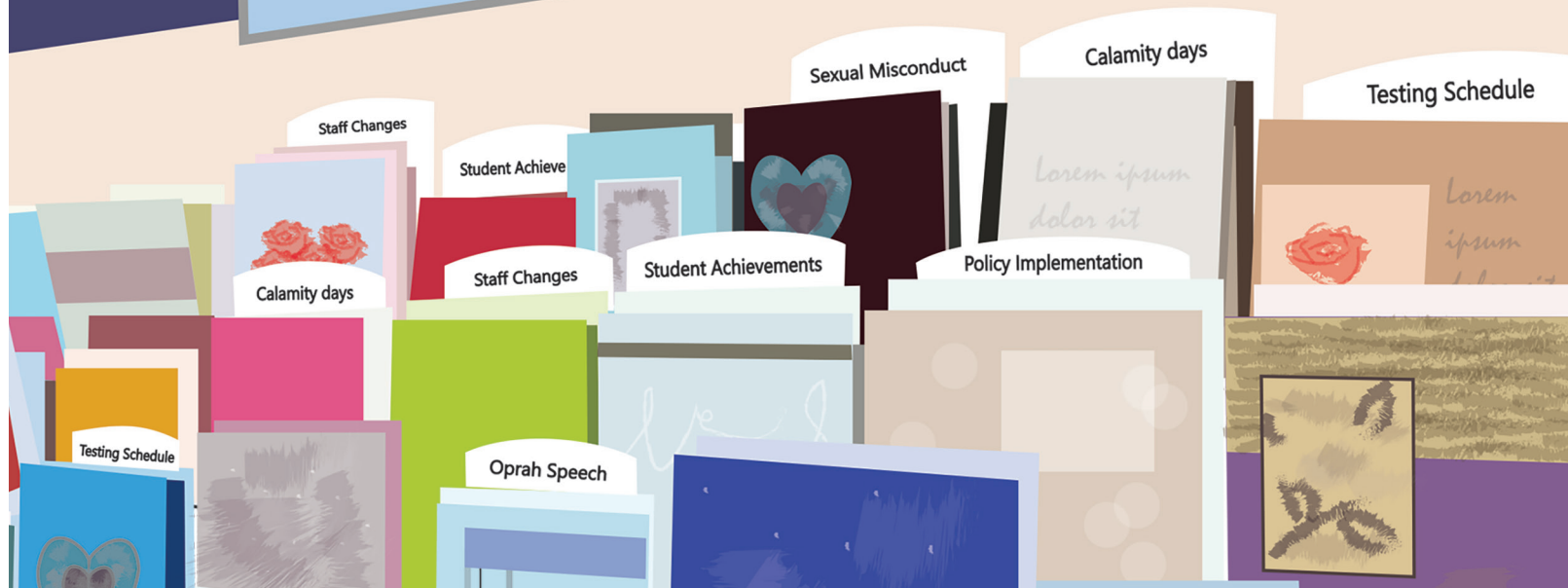
Alana gets upset when she's late for preschool. She says, "No! I won't be there on time." She enjoys her friends. She enjoys her teachers. Her mother sees her becoming her own person. She remembers Alana coming home and saying, "Mom, I was a risk-taker today because I tried the broccoli!"

"It's going to make a big difference and impact on Shaker," McCarthy said. "It might take some time because they're only 3. But if we keep doing this it will make a big impact on the district."

"Every kid should have a high-quality education experience."

Rebecca Harper
Preschool Teacher

Public Statements



Alexa Jankowsky, Visuals Managing Editor

If We're Lucky, Loud or Oprah, They Just Might Respond

Communication goes both ways, and with two overdue public statements, the administration has failed yet again at both of them.

Timothy Mitchell pleaded guilty to child endangerment Oct. 12, having provided alcohol and marijuana to and having had sex with his 16-year-old student when he was 36 in 1995. He served 68 days of his nine-month sentence, then was released Dec. 19.



Emily Montenegro
Opinion Editor

Aside from two vague emails, the administration has remained silent since their statement on his indictment in April. Executive Director of Communications Scott Stephens made it clear that Mitchell is out of sight,

out of mind when he said the former social studies teacher's release "doesn't affect the district — he has been gone since Memorial Day."

What might be more infuriating than the administration's prolonged silence was what they said when they broke it.

High school Principal Jonathan Kuehnle and Superintendent Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., are the only two employees to have publicly stated the district's intolerance of sexual harassment and misconduct, and their respective district-wide emails were too little, too late and too offensively ignorant.

When Kuehnle sent his email over Thanksgiving break, he credited the holiday for providing an opportune time for families to discuss sexual harassment and victim empowerment. Nine months after his formal April 2017 statement, Hutchings finally released a more passionate email, inspired by

a single celebrity 2,000 miles away: Oprah Winfrey.

Winfrey, who needs no introduction, gave an empowering, emotional, eloquent speech when she accepted the Cecil B. de Mille award at the 2018 Golden Globes Jan. 7. The next day, Hutchings exploited these words in a district-wide email, delivering a stinging smack in the face to so many, including me, who have provided a number of opportunities — all ignored — for the administration to engage in this very discussion.

“Oprah Winfrey’s words, and the words and actions of so many others, provide us an opportunity to reflect on our own values,” Hutchings wrote. “As a result, I want to publicly state that we will never tolerate or condone any form of harassment or assault to our young people in the Shaker Schools.”

Well, thanks, Oprah, for saying what we have been shouting at him for months.

The Editorial Board published a ‘Rite Idea titled “Moving on Requires More Than Paint” in the October print edition. “None of us can reconcile alone, and none of us should have to,” we wrote. Shaker’s five months of administrative silence and lonely reconciliation are apparently over; now, we can reconcile with a few inspirational Oprah quotes.

Sophomore Ainsley Snyder, our Spotlight editor, published online her Nov. 9 column, “Who Deserves It?” and courageously shared her own Me Too testimony — recurring incidents of verbal sexual harassment. “I am writing this story to bring awareness to this issue and to fight for what I believe in,” she wrote. Kuehnle shared her article on his Twitter account and commented, “Our young men need to learn to treat everyone with respect.”

I responded online to this tweet with an open letter to Kuehnle, five days later, titled “Tweets Will Not Protect Us.” I argued that it is his responsibility to lead and teach said young men. I received no response until Dec. 6, when I asked him for one directly. He agreed with an assortment of points I made in the letter. Then he stated that when he first read my letter, he felt inspired by the effect his one tweet achieved and expressed his wishes that other leaders in our country could tweet such impactful things.

On Nov. 17, Jennie Reiff publicly addressed the administration in her online op-ed, “They shouldn’t need to learn it from me.” Reiff, now 33, was the 16-year-old Shaker student whom Mitchell assaulted. She emphasized Shaker’s need to proactively address the reality of sexual harassment in their buildings, and voiced that she is continuously disappointed in the administration’s silence. “The perceived inaction does a disservice to me and to every Shaker student, past, present and future,” Reiff wrote. The administration did not respond.

Most recently, senior Madi Hart published an online Guest ‘Rite titled, “Be Safe, Be Respectful and Sweep Things Under the Rug” on Jan. 9. She expressed her own disappointment that the administration keeps avoiding Mitchell discussions, and that Hutchings ignored students’ demands for comment until Oprah delivered her speech. Kuehnle reached out via email for further discussion, but, Hart said, he never scheduled it.

Reiff commented on Hart’s piece on Facebook, noting the hypocrisy underlying Hutchings’ promises: “He claims to stand with us, but he certainly wasn’t standing with me at the Justice Center in October,” Reiff wrote. “It’s clear the administration would prefer to pretend I don’t exist. I’m glad Oprah got through to him, though.”

Her comment is heartbreaking, and its subject is enraging. He chose to respond to Winfrey rather than to the women who walk his halls, who have repeatedly urged him to consider our perspectives and our demands — as a leader should. He chose to ignore the woman who spoke her truth so that she might live unburdened by something that was never her fault.

I’m disheartened that at this point, I’m afraid to ask for any further administrative statements because I don’t want the same copied-and-pasted language about Shaker policy, values and dedication to students; the same robotic buzzwords couched in emotionless jargon and promises to “continue” protecting students.

I’m disheartened by how little effect I expect to have on administrative decisions. I’m disheartened to learn that in my own community, no one’s voice carries as far or resounds as loudly as Oprah’s.

Tell Us Why *and We'll Comply*

If students are the best defense,
they deserve frank explanations

— The Editorial Board

Illustration by Alexa Jankowsky





Imagine that it is a typical Monday morning at Shaker Heights High School. The second period bell rings, the hallways swell with students, and a tide of red lanyards washes past security guards. These students' IDs, dangling clearly from around their necks, affirm that they belong in the building.

Imagine that during this four-minute transition, however, a disheveled individual enters the front door.

Students passing by notice this individual because of a striking dissimilarity: He is not wearing an ID. Because this behavior is so irregular, security guards immediately divert their attention to this individual, who looks to be of high school age.

Imagine that in a swift, calculated procedure, security staff apprehend him and contain the situation.

And imagine that the unidentified student who entered the building that morning had a loaded weapon in his backpack.

The defusing of this hypothetical, dire situation may have been a successful outcome of the high school's safety protocols, one of which now requires all students to clearly display their IDs all day, every day.

In this hypothetical

situation, the policy's success hinged on buy-in from students; because everyone agreed to wear IDs, IDs may have saved lives.

In a Jan. 3 interview regarding past high school incidents that endangered students' safety, Executive Director of Communications Scott Stephens said, "The one biggest thing that has made those things end well has been students themselves speaking up to an adult. That to me is the most impressive thing — that you students yourselves are our best defense against a lot of this stuff."

If this holds true — if the administration places so much of the onus on students when it comes to our safety, to the extent that we are their best defense against threats, and enlists us to carry out this responsibility — they must communicate with us more forthrightly.

Students would be more amenable to this policy if it meant saving their lives, rather than being able to check out a library book.

For such a significant change to be implemented mid-year — for students to now keep their IDs in sight after years of excavating them from lockers or bookbags once a year to buy prom tickets — students will assume that an inci-

dent has occurred to justify the change.

Otherwise, the administration could have waited until the start of the next school year to make it.

Despite two incidents involving guns at the high school since the beginning of the school year, Kuehnle did not mention such a catalyst's existence when prompted during a Jan. 23 interview. He only cited recent school shootings in Texas and Kentucky as reason for students to wear their IDs constantly.

If this new policy could help prevent such a serious scenario, why not communicate that from the beginning, and why not use the two incidents at the high school, rather than pointing to events hundreds of miles away?

For students to wear their IDs around their necks every day, for students to speak up and be comfortable doing what Stephens claims some already do, the administration must communicate policy changes to us frankly, in a manner that encourages us to accept the onus that they have placed on us.

It is not students' responsibility, nor is it this news organization's, to fill in the blanks of the administration's flawed communication.

MEET MICHELE

**In an exclusive
interview, the
enigmatic bird
of Room 171
shares her story**

Emilie Evans, Opinion Editor

What is your name?

Michele Parakeeter

**I notice that you're not native to Cleveland.
Where are you from?**

Well, I unfortunately was born right here in this dump of a town that wins championships every 52 years. But my family is from the most magical place on earth.

Disney World?

Very funny. No. We originate from a gorgeous tree, centered in the middle of the most beautiful rain-forest in the world. My mom would tell me stories passed down among generations. They give me hope, something to lighten the mood, in this bleak world filled with fluorescent lights and bratty kids.

**Wow that sounds like an amazing way to live.
What made your family want to move here?**

What MADE us move here were those disgusting humans. None of us WANTED to be torn from the only world we ever knew. Frankly, the only one we ever WANTED to know. They came to our tree one day, and snuck up on my ancestors as they sat in

their nest and put the whole dang thing into a net. From there the greedy humans transported us to the most foreign place of all: a pet store. I'm a first generation. I hatched in that store. I was sold and





Alexa Jankowsky, Visuals Managing Editor

now I'm here.

How's life at the high school?

Well, I can tell you one thing: I've devoted my life

here to taking revenge on the humans. I'll never know what it feels like to fly free in the forests of Brazil. Instead I have to sit in this tiny cage while all these students just stare at me . . if they ever even look. Now I'm stuck in this tiny cage with a couple twigs, a ladder and a couple houses. Oh and dirt. Can't forget the dirt.

Oh, wow, you are one angry bird.

Do NOT even get me started on that game!

Sorry. Was that insensitive?

IT'S ALL INSENSITIVE.

Can you give me some examples?

Tweety Bird, Big Bird, Kevin from UP, Chicken Little, that owl from Harry Potter, Woody Woodpecker, Donald Duck . . . I could go on.

So you feel strongly about this?

Well, of course. No self-respecting endothermic vertebrate characterized by feathers, toothless beaked jaws, the laying of hard-shelled eggs, a high metabolic rate, a four-chambered heart and a strong yet lightweight skeleton would be FINE with this.

That's a long description.

Well, that's what a bird is, damn it... according to Wikipedia. Oh, and that stupid Twitter. I mean, they're just being MEAN at this point.

They?

Those people! The people who create all these ways to exploit bird culture. We tweet day and night about our problems, but I guess no one cares about a tweet unless it's 280 characters or less. I just don't understand why humans do what they do on there. Just because a tweet gets a lot of retweets and likes doesn't mean a big company should give someone free chicken nuggets. I thought companies were supposed to be professional, so why do places like Wendy's and McDonald's act like 5-year-olds on this website?

And WHY did the people running for president tell each other to delete their accounts? I feel like this

whole social media thing just has to be some sort of big prank. Now, suddenly, a word that was created to describe our dialect has silenced us and given power to loser-users like Donald Drumph. Now, when people think “tweet,” they think of those horrendous memes, not about what a bird does.

Right . . . So, what’s it like living in a classroom? You must be close with the students.

You mean the demons? First off, they never pay attention to me. They just stare at the front of the classroom and use those wooden sticks to make symbols on the white leaves. Even when I’m talking at the top of my lungs they never listen ... it’s like they don’t even care about bolitics.

Bolitics?

Bird politics ... societal issues?

Oh, my mistake.

ANYWAYS. I’m always trying to get my message out, but they just stare at the Worried One at the front of the room.

Sometimes they’re all quiet and just stare at their white leaves for the whole time, looking very confused. That’s when I tweet the loudest because I KNOW they have to hear me. They still look very confused, so I’m guessing it’s because my level of intelligence is too advanced for them. My tweets go right over their heads. Maybe if I write it on that forsaken app and attach a funny picture they’ll get it. They do seem to be on their phones a lot when the Worried One is talking . . . maybe they’re waiting for my tweets in written form. Can I borrow your device?

Maybe later. What is your favorite thing about the classroom?

My favorite thing is knowing that one day I won’t have to live there anymore.

01 Michele Parakeeter inquisitively regards the Shakerite microphone as she is interviewed. Michele, born in a rainforest, now resides in the science wing of Shaker Heights High School.

02 Michele, now skeptical of the Shakerite microphone, distances herself from her interviewer. Michele has distrusted humans since her family’s forced removal from their home during her childhood.

03 Evans distances herself from Michele, now fully aware of her unbridled contempt for her species.

04 Michele currently resides in Room 171, Shaker Heights High School. She has considered submitting her cage to hit remodeling shows like Property Brothers, but fears aviary discrimination.

05 Michele coldly regards the camera moments after biting Evans.

There’s nothing that you like about it?

Well, I like messing with the students. I love to chirp over them during presentations, proving all of their points wrong and distracting them when they play with the test tubes. One day I hope one gets close enough to bite.

Why such disdain for young learners?

It’s because of them, well, children in general, that my species is taken from their homes. Bratty children just NEED to have pets, and we have to pay the price for it. The entire “pet” industry is ridiculous and exploits poor animals that cannot alone fight the reign of the brutal dictators that are human beings.

So . . . moving on. How do you like those toys in your cage? What’s the backstory there?

Are you kidding me? A bird’s one chance to represent the problems of our species and you think I’m going to squander it by discussing toys and life at the high school? Though I do have a really cool dangling chain of plastic rings that I like to land on. Wait no, that’s besides the point. I’m going to talk about the important issues here if that’s OK with you.

Well, that’s not really the intended angle of the story here. What’s your favorite treat?

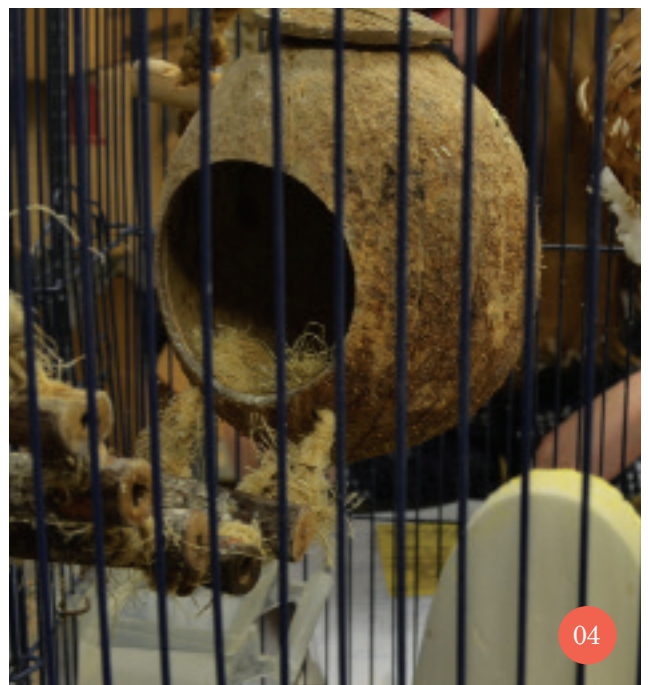
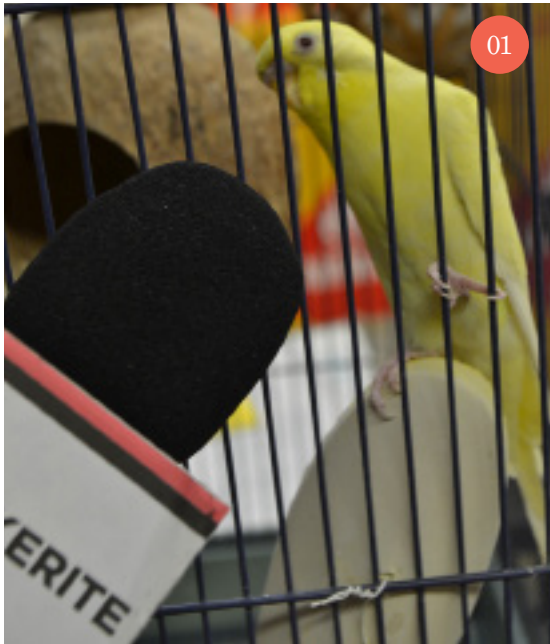
Freedom.

Oh. So, any big, bird plans for the future?

What did I say about Big Bird?

It was super nice to meet you Michele! I think I have everything I need, I wish you the best of . . . OW! Did you just bite me?

I would say this was a waste of my time, but it’s not like I can do anything productive trapped in here.



Leading Us Through History

Since summer, Sankofa performers and alumni have been writing, choreographing and rehearsing the annual event

Ainsley Snyder, Spotlight Editor

It has been over a year in Trump's America and one year since Shaker's last Sankofa performance.

Now, students are wondering what topics from the past year — such as kneeling to protest police brutality, equating white supremacists with counterprotesters or defunding Planned Parenthood — will be addressed during one of the high school's most anticipated student events.

"Sankofa is an outlet for any frustrations, questions — any pressing issues that we want to ask our audience through the story," junior Madison Wilson said. Wilson will perform a spoken word piece in the annual celebration of African-American history and identity March 2 and 3 in the Large Auditorium.

Sankofa means "go back and get it" in Twi, a language of Ghana.

The performance has been staged annually at the high school since 1998, and it has always tak-

Producer Lawrence Butler ('13) teaches Sankofa performers how to work a soundboard. **Photo by David Vahey**





en place during February to honor Black History Month.

“The symbol of Sankofa is a bird that flies forward while looking back, so it tries to keep progressing and also reflecting on the past and our history — African-American history and heritage — and we try to celebrate that to the best of our ability,” Wilson said.

Sankofa is a student-run group advised by art teacher Keaf Holliday and Shaker alumni Hombre Thomas and Sydney Connors, who have been planning the show since summer with junior Sankofa leader Adonis Fryer.

They have worked throughout the year to stage an original performance with the help of the students and leaders involved.

Sankofa performers auditioned for dance, music, drama or spoken word roles in October and have continued to practice since. They attend weekly rehearsals for their specific art forms, and when the show nears, they dedicate more time on weekends to perfect the performance.

Seventy students are working on Sankofa this year, including performers, stage crew, band and leaders.

“We’ve built Sankofa on a paradigm of leadership, ranging from multitask leaders to main leaders to co-leaders, so there’s a lot of leadership grooming,” Holliday said.

Each role a student assumes comes with its own forms of leadership. Students decide what topics they would like to portray and how they would like to present them. Other times, students will become leaders in their divisions of Sankofa.

Junior Nya Christian and senior Makiya Ashe have participated in Sankofa for three years and this year have taken on the responsibilities of dance leaders, which include helping with choreography

and precision, and ensuring that students attend rehearsals.

Holliday also brings in Shaker and Sankofa alumni, such as Thomas and Connors, to supervise students and the writing of the script.

Wilson said that each performer is passionate about Sankofa. “Everybody is so talented, and everybody is so determined to get the message across, no matter what it is, and each year it’s something different. But we always make sure we go back to the roots,” she said.

“Sankofa is the time around Black History Month where we’re able to embrace cultures and put that as a priority,” junior Ludiah Bagakas said.

“I’m appreciative that we do have Sankofa because it is such a big meaning in itself that it can still make an impact whether or not it’s in February,” she continued.

Bagakas will play the cello and perform all original pieces in the upcoming performance. She has participated in Sankofa for two years.

This year, students have devoted more time to writing the script and incorporating multimedia to connect each performance to history or current events.

Holliday also wants to incorporate string instrumentalists for the first time, such as a

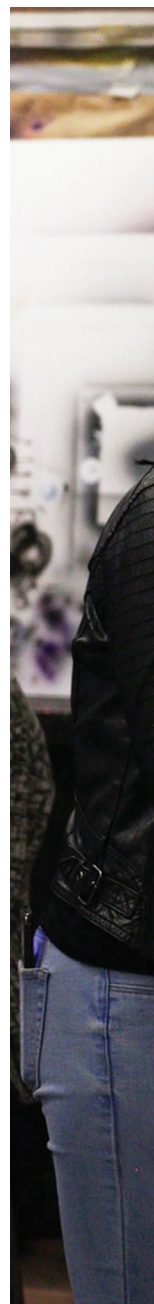
cellist and violinist.

Students said the cast gets along very well, but according to sophomore Jared Christopher, who will participate in drama and spoken word pieces, the cast can become competitive because they aren’t assigned their scenes. According to Christopher, members have to “battle” for them.

This will be Sankofa’s third year performing for the middle school. Holliday said that middle school

“Black History Month shouldn’t be limited within the bounds of February, because black history is world history.”

**Madison Wilson
Junior**





Junior Mary Wolf-Sharpe and senior Autumn Hamilton, singing leaders, work on solo vocal pieces for the upcoming performance. Photo by David Vahey

“It’s hard because sometimes African-American heritage is not reflected in textbooks and the curriculum of the school,” Wilson said.

“It’s not a play. It’s much more than that. It’s a celebration. It’s us filling in the blanks in textbooks and rewriting them for ourselves — and trying to raise awareness for different problems that African-Americans face,” she continued.

This is the first year that Sankofa will not be held during February, which is Black History Month.

The performance typically occurs on the last Friday and Saturday of February, and this year, February ends on a Wednesday.

According to Shaker Theatre Arts Department Chairman Scott Sumerak, he and Holliday decided to schedule Sankofa at the end of the last week of February, which means it will be held March 2 and 3, and “Carrie: The Musical” will be held Feb. 22-24.

“I felt like [February is] the one month where we put black identities and really embrace their cultures as a priority,” Bagakas said. “So, when they were replacing it

with the school play, it’s almost like they put something else as a priority before that, and I didn’t understand why.”

“At first I was upset about it, but I realize as a country, we try to put all of our black history achievements and everything into February,” Christian said. “I think that the fact that Sankofa is in March kind of shows that we can still celebrate it outside of the month.”

“Black History Month shouldn’t be limited with-

students who watch the performance come to the high school and join Sankofa.

While the origin of Sankofa is consistent, its significance varies among students.

“Sankofa is a family of students who each have their own talent, and we all have one goal of telling people about black history and what it means to us personally,” Christian said.

“I feel like it sends a message with black culture all around. It shows people’s talents and it’s a good thing for the school to see,” Ashe said.



in the bounds of February, because black history is world history. The fact that we even get to do [Sankofa] is a blessing in itself,” Wilson said.

The performance represents African-American history and culture through the students’ passion for their preferred art forms, such as dancing, playing an instrument, rapping, singing and speaking.

“I think it is important to the school because it gets everybody involved in what has happened [throughout African-American history] and what is happening now, because just talking about it in a boring lecture isn’t enough,” Christopher said.

“You get people invested while having rhythm to it, to get people into it,” he continued. “The more you draw their attention, the more they’ll listen and the more they actually know what’s happening.”

The content of the annual performance is typically influenced by politics and current events. Two years ago, Sankofa was titled “Dear Black America.” It included a 10-second silent observation with a “Hoods Up” demonstration to commemorate the fourth anniversary of Trayvon Martin’s death, and to address the rising activism in the Black Lives Matter movement.



The show also tapped other topics, including teen pregnancy, slavery, black achievement and B.B. King. Its theme was, “We have no limits.”

During the week leading up to Sankofa that year, students also organized a day-long “Hoods Up” protest throughout the school, a display that violated school policy banning hoods for security reasons.

Last year’s performance delivered expected references to the newly-inaugurated president, Donald

Junior drama leader Brianna Jarell writes a scene about the difference between a healthy relationship and a toxic one. Photo by David Vahey

Trump, the Black Lives Matter movement and the story behind the movie “Hidden Figures.”

The program followed the story of a young man facing adversity, comparing what his life was to what it could have been. The theme of this show was, “Overcoming: See me not as I am, but what I will become.”

“I remember my friend Maximus recited this scene, ‘What do you want from me?’ ” Christopher said about last year’s performance.

He said, “It basically talked about what a black person might say to a white person, like, ‘You want me to fail?’ ‘You want me to not succeed?’ ”

This year, students anticipate Sankofa will address the controversies that have emerged during Trump’s first year as president.

“We are dealing with some of the Trump backlash, of how President Trump is making some rash decisions that are affecting the community as a whole and how it affects not only black America, but America in general,” Holliday said. “We will be having some type of spoken word or scene that deals with those issues, current issues.”

Ashe said that the dancers are performing ’90s-inspired pieces along with tap routines, and that this year, the dance pieces will be longer and more precise. According to Holliday, the show’s theme is not revealed until the performance, though the basic structure remains consistent.

“Black history is so plentiful, so we can always find new material,” Holliday said. “It’s still going to have the same monologue-dialogue approach. We’re not going to lose that structure, so it’s always going to have some of the same resemblance as far as format, but the material always changes.”

“People know that when they come to the show, they come to listen, they come to reflect, they come to soak in everything,” Wilson said. “As a performer, I think it is important that we get to bring our audience into a different realm.”

Christopher said, “Expect us to get into some serious topics, and we’re not really going to be slow about it. We’re gonna come at you. We’re gonna scream it in your face.”

Journalism II Reporter Katie Cronin contributed reporting.



New Opportunity Exposes New Talent

This year, novel instructional approach
integrates novice musicians
with experienced orchestral peers

*Emilie Evans, Opinion Editor
Photo by Grace Loughheed*

When it comes to playing an instrument in the orchestra, the earlier you start, the better.

Shaker offers plenty of opportunities to those who participate in its band, orchestra and choir programs. There are trips abroad, and just last year, the Shaker orchestra earned third place at the Orchestra Cup National Orchestra Championship in New York City.

However, a persistent challenge for the band and orchestra programs lies in the years of experience required to participate. For a longtime Shaker student, this isn't a problem. When students enter fifth grade at Woodbury, they are required to play an instrument. Their musical educations can continue through the middle school and then onto the high school with its award-winning bands and orchestras.

But for students who previously attended schools without music programs or required participation, the path to high school band and orchestra is less clear.

So, how do new students participate in Shaker's band or orchestra? The answer in past years has been simple: They didn't.

Orchestra teacher and Music Department Chairwoman Donna Jelen wanted to change this. "I knew that there were kids in the building who wanted to learn an instrument," she said. "What I had found in previous years is, students who try to start in high school are at a real disadvantage because all the other kids have been playing for four or more years."

Last year, with help from guidance counselors, Jelen proposed the creation of an opportunity for beginners to start playing an instrument at the high school. She has worked since to ensure its success.

School counselor David Peake participated in

the effort. "It was really a conversation within the guidance department when we met with Mrs. Jelen last year, to talk about the possibility of opening the course to students that have never played before," he said.

"If you haven't played before, you couldn't come here and start playing an instrument. Until now. This is the first year that students have been able to do that."

Jelen and the counselors originally wanted to offer the opportunity as a separate class, but the master schedule did not allow it. Having a blended class didn't seem like it was going to work until Jelen realized she would mentor a student teacher this

year. "If I have a student teacher, that's two people in the room; it can work," Jelen said. "The student teacher can start off the beginners and incorporate them into the class as they become ready."

School counselors offered this new opportunity to students who had either expressed interest in the music program or who felt they would enjoy learning to play a new instrument.

"One of the things we're pushing right now in the district is equity," said Peake, who serves as co-chairperson of the district's Equity Task Force. "I

think that the program is a great demonstration of equity and how someone as accomplished as Mrs. Jelen can take time to work with beginners when she's simultaneously working with students that have been playing since they could read."

One of Jelen's main worries is whether this opportunity will continue to be offered next year without the help of a student teacher.

"Student teachers are assigned from music education programs at area colleges and universities. Once their students complete the coursework required to be eligible for student teaching, their schools work to match each student with an appro-

**"I knew that
there were kids
in the building
who wanted to
learn an
instrument."**

**Donna Jelen
Orchestra Teacher**

priate cooperating teacher in the area,” Jelen said. “There is no guarantee that I will have one next year — it just depends on whether the area colleges and universities with music education degree or certification programs have student teacher candidates who would match well with what I offer at Shaker.”

At the beginning of the school year, Jelen’s student teacher, Tori Petrak, took beginners into a separate room and began teaching them the basics during the ninth period String Orchestra class. As they progressed, the students joined the rest of the orchestra when they felt comfortable. At this point, every student has moved into the full orchestra.

“It was a great experience to have the opportunity to start beginners at the high school level. I think it’s rare to be able to offer that opportunity

to students but also really amazing that we were able to,” Petrak said. “I’ve had experience teaching young beginners before, and some experience with high school musicians who have played for a long time, but this was new to me. Figuring out the best way to teach students with a wide range of musical backgrounds on three different instruments was challenging but also so much fun to be able to experiment until I found what worked best.”

High school students of all ages have taken advantage of this opportunity. Senior Janelle Perrin, who already plays the piano, began the violin this year. “I feel like the piano and the violin go hand in hand together, so I wanted to learn how to play both,” she said. “Keeping up with the orchestra is the hardest challenge, but it’s getting easier.”

Lawrence Seizes Opportunities

Dejonte Lawrence is a freshman who, like many other students, juggles his studies, sports and an instrument. However, unlike most members of the high school’s orchestra, he hasn’t been playing the violin since fifth grade.

Lawrence is one of 11 students learning to play a new instrument in the string orchestra this year. While some took this opportunity to learn how to play, other existing orchestra members used the opportunity to switch instruments.

Lawrence never played an instrument prior to high school, but was always interested in the sound of the violin. He was inspired by vio-



Kay Petrovic

linist Lindsey Stirling after watching her videos on YouTube. “I wanted to play like that,” he said.

Stirling, 31, performs a variety of music styles including classical and pop rock.

Lawrence also began playing football in middle school after transferring to Shaker schools in seventh grade. “I played football when I was younger, but that was my first time actually playing with a team, so that was pretty cool for me to learn how to play,” he said.

Lawrence said that learning to play football in middle school among more experienced players was discouraging, but he persevered. He hopes to

secure a spot on the varsity team next season and play football at Ohio State, where he hopes to be recruited by the National Football League.

"After high school, you have to get a scholarship to college and play and then NFL recruiters come and see," Lawrence said.

Because there was no novice instrumental program at the middle school to integrate him with the rest of the students, Lawrence didn't have an opportunity to join the orchestra until this year. When he arrived, he took advantage of the opportunity provided by Jelen and school counselors.

When starting in the orchestra this year, Lawrence said he found it hard to draw support from his friends. Many of them believed starting the violin would be too difficult. However, Lawrence was persistent.

When he first started playing violin, the most difficult adjustment was learning how to use his left hand. "If you're not left handed, it's going to be hard," he said. "The left hand plays the notes and

strings, while the right hand holds the bow."

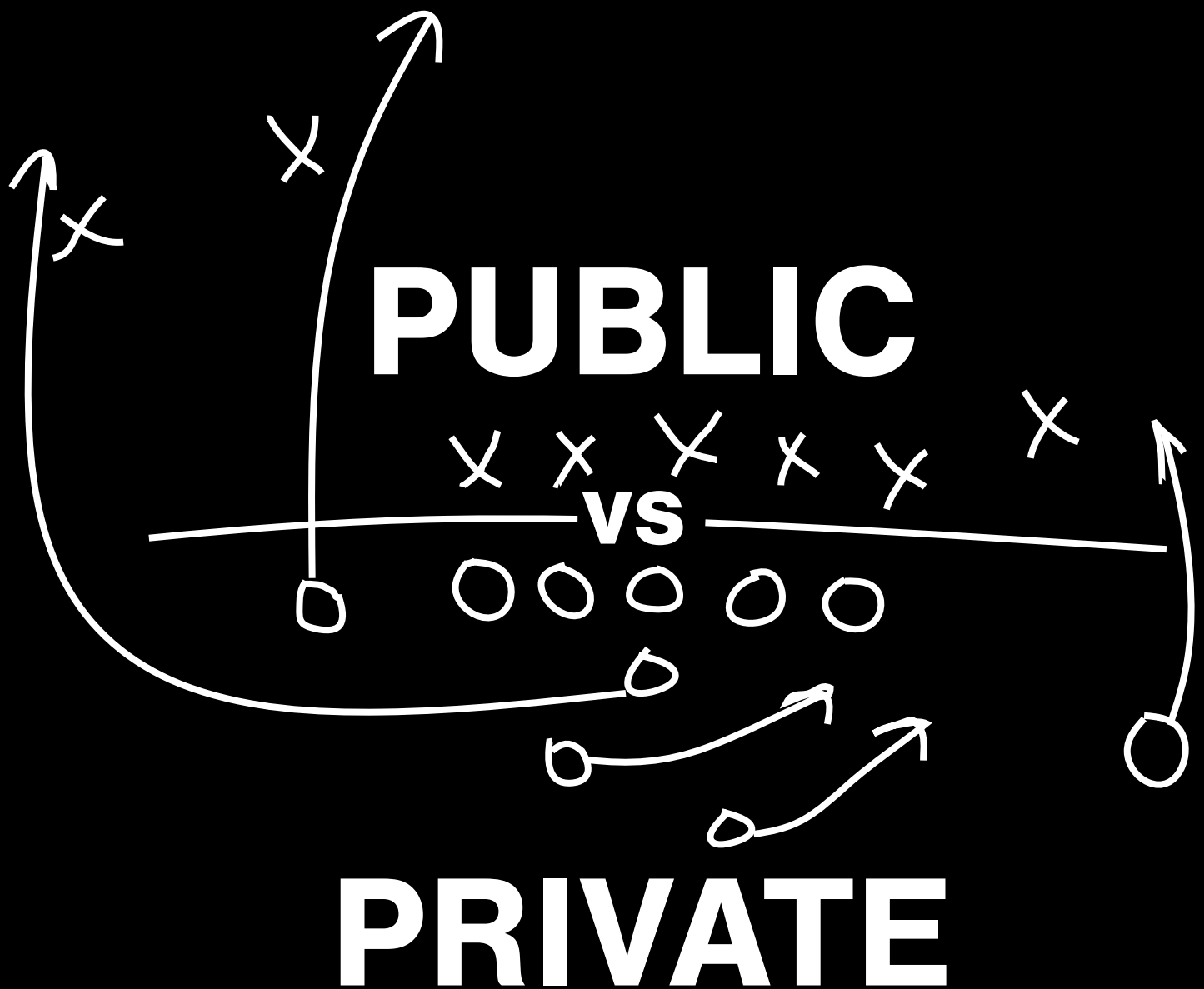
Lawrence explained that the hardest skill for him to master is the vibrato. "You vibrate your finger on the string, and it makes a unique sound," he said. "But it's hard for me to do it since I'm a beginner."

Petrak said Lawrence had an advantage when beginning the class. "He had told me that he had watched Lindsey Stirling play violin, and I think that watching another violinist before learning to play himself helped his posture and violin hold come more naturally to him," she said. "He always had great questions and really wanted to learn more advanced skills he had seen other violinists do, like vibrato, which was awesome."

Lawrence said that once Petrak taught them the basics, playing the instrument came naturally. He said, "I didn't think I was going to learn to play the violin this easy or this fast."

Dona Jelen instructs
her ninth period String
Orchestra class.
Photo by Kay
Petrovic





State formula aims to solve
inequity between foes

DC Benincasa, Raider Zone Editor

Priate schools won 43 percent of state championships in 2009. Yet, private schools comprised only 16 percent of the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

The OHSAA created the Competitive Balance Committee in January 2010 to address concerns about private school domination in state championships. For example, only one of seven teams that won a 2009 high school football state championship was a public school.

The committee comprises selected OHSAA staff members, superintendents, principals and athletic administrators. It includes educators from school districts of various sizes and demographics.

"The committee has come up with different proposals to try to help with the situation," OHSAA senior official Bob Goldring stated.

According to Goldring, all proposals are presented to the OHSAA board of directors.

Once the board approves a proposal, 820 high school principals across the state vote on it. For a proposal to pass, it needs a simple majority vote.

Before the competitive balance proposal passed, the OHSAA placed teams into divisions based on their state-assigned Education Management Information System number, which is the number of students enrolled in grades 9-11.

However, in a 2014 decision, the committee passed a proposal that created a new formula that calculates a competitive balance number, which is added to a school's EMIS number.

The EMIS number for male sports is the number of male students enrolled in grades 9-11, and for female sports, the number of female students enrolled in grades 9-11.

The competitive balance number for each school, as calculated by the formula, is added to these EMIS numbers. The resulting number determines which divisions Ohio high schools compete in, Division I, II or III.

The competitive balance number is derived by categorizing athletes into three tiers by a complex set of criteria. In short, the state looks at the student's home address and where the student attended school previously.

Each student is assigned to a particular tier based on these two factors. Then, each tier is assigned a multiplier, which is added to the school's EMIS number to generate an adjusted enrollment count.

The formula addresses schools that attract more athletes from outside of their feeder schools, giving them a competitive advantage. Public and private high schools draw the most students from their affiliated middle, or feeder, schools.

Private schools attract more students from outside of their feeder schools, so their competitive balance numbers tend to be higher than those of public schools.

The formula amplifies the large gap between the largest and smallest schools in Division I.

Because Shaker does not offer open enrollment, no Shaker students legally reside outside of the district's attendance zone. Therefore, the school's competitive bal-

ance number is zero.

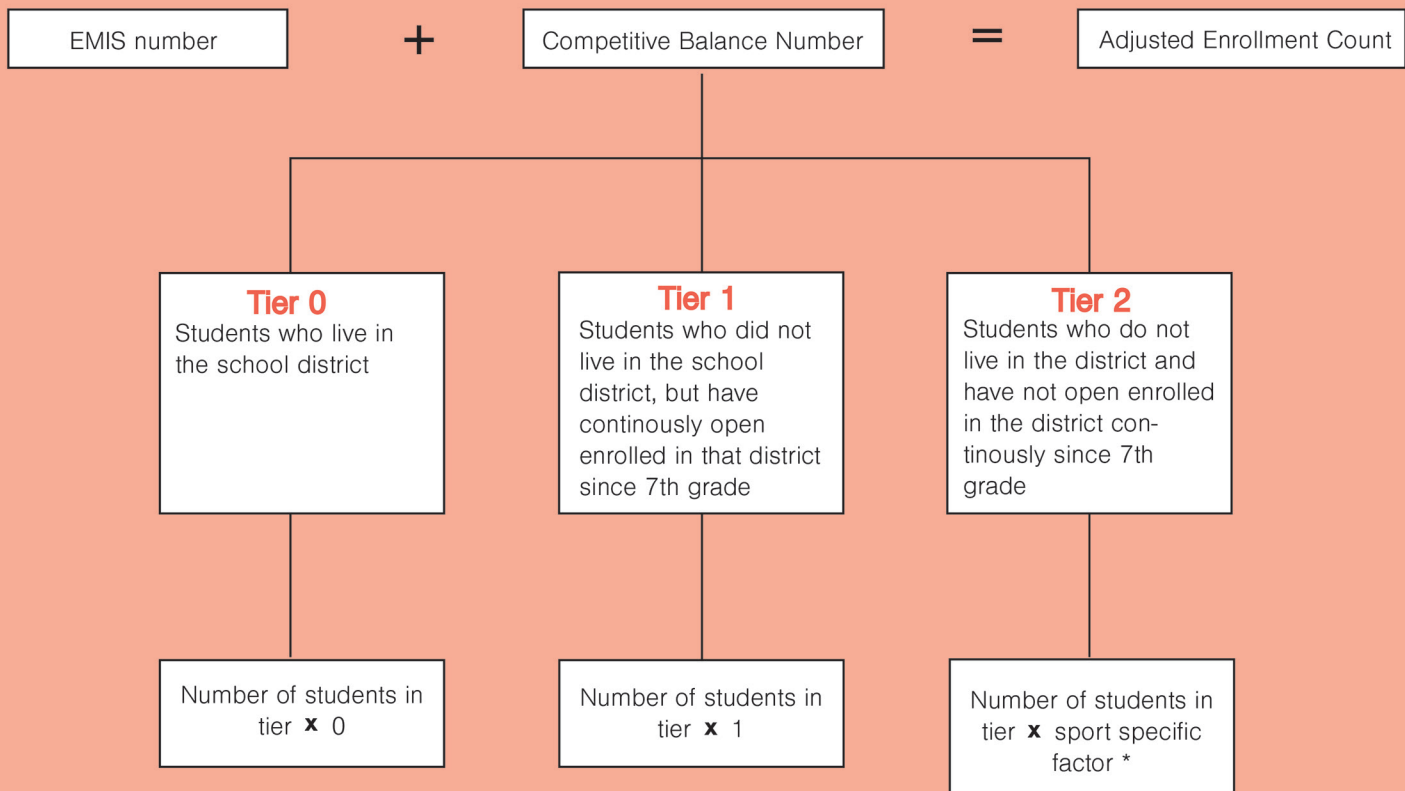
According to the Ohio Department of Education, 17.9 percent of Ohio school districts don't offer open enrollment, which allows students to attend a school outside of their residential districts, tuition free. Sports teams at non-open enrollment schools, including Shaker, comprise only students who live in the school district.

Last year, varsity football had an EMIS number

**"The
[competitive
balance]
committee has
come up with
different
proposals to
try to help
with the
situation."**

**Bob Goldring
OHSAA Senior Official**

ADJUSTED ENROLLMENT NUMBER FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS



* Sport Specific Factors:

Football: 2, Volleyball, Basketball, Baseball and Softball: 5, Soccer: 6

of 645. Because Shaker has a competitive balance number of zero, the adjusted enrollment count after the formula was still 645.

St. Xavier, however, had an EMIS number of 1,178 and a competitive balance number of 354, giving the school an adjusted enrollment count of 1,532. St. Xavier has won three football state championships.

Skilled athletes flock to private schools to win state titles and pursue athletic scholarships. In ad-

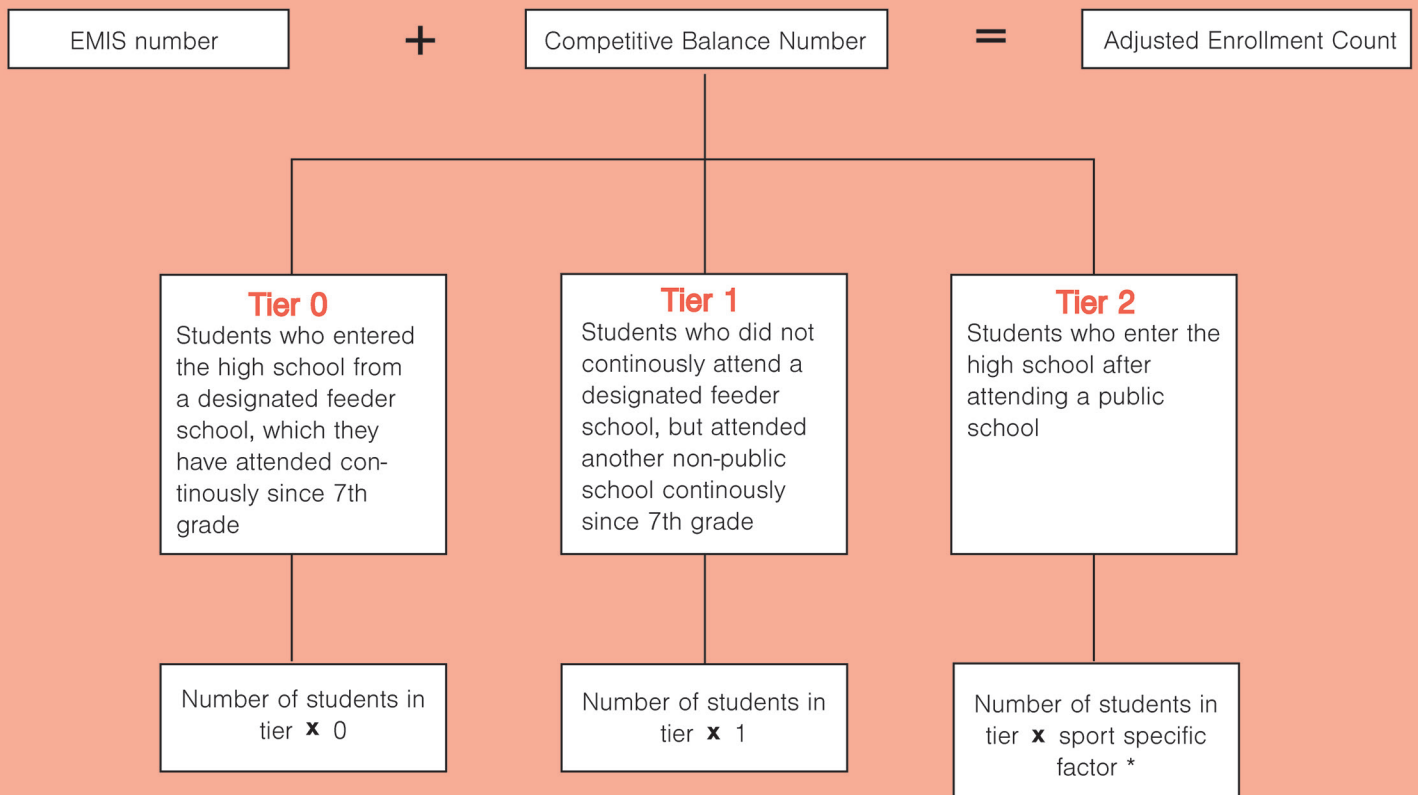
dition, private schools enjoy greater access to and flexibility in funding.

Bleacher Report stated, "Private schools can receive money from big-shot donors and use that money toward whatever sports programs they want."

Private schools can use such funding to participate in more tournaments or buy more practice time on ice, for example.

Private schools' winning athletic culture gives them an advantage over public schools, and school

ADJUSTED ENROLLMENT NUMBER FOR NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS



officials are trying to level the playing field by elevating successful Division II and Division III private schools into higher divisions.

This action is meant to give public schools in Division II and Division III an advantage by sending their strongest competitors to fight against bigger foes.

Michael Babinec, assistant athletic director, said that the point of the formula is to bump up dominant Division II and III schools such as Archbishop

Hoban into higher-skilled divisions. Archbishop Hoban has won football state championships in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Goldring agreed. "So, if multiple factors are added to school enrollment figures based on where schools obtain their team members, the result is a school will move up to a higher division for tournament competition," he stated.

Yet, the formula doesn't affect the placement of most Division I public schools, such as Shaker.

“When we do our competitive balance, it really isn’t a factor for us because we’re pretty much always going to be at the Division I level. We’re kind of towards the bottom end of Division I in terms of enrollment, but I don’t think we’re anywhere near benefiting from dropping to Division II,” Babinec said.

Dropping down to Division II would likely lead to Shaker’s dominance, because Division II schools have fewer students and thus a smaller pool of athletic talent.

Shaker wouldn’t benefit from moving to Division II because the Raiders are already a competitive Division I program, having won Division I OHSAA state championships in seven different sports.

Even if Shaker wanted to drop down to Division II and win more state championships, the state wouldn’t allow it unless enrollment declined sufficiently. Falling enrollment would be harmful to the community and district, and while Shaker could win more state titles, dropping to Division II might also mean the Raiders would find themselves consistently dominating opponents.

If the Raiders were to consistently outperform teams in Division II, Shaker would lose the competitiveness that is vital to the strength of high school athletics.

Whether the competitive balance formula reduces the gap in athletic success between private and public schools has yet to be seen.

“That answer will probably be in the eye of the beholder,” Goldring stated.

“Has competitive balance made a difference? Right now that is difficult to say,” he continued. “It may just be the cycle we happen to be in.”

The cycle Goldring referred to makes high school athletics unbalanced, with athletes from all demographics flocking to successful private schools and public schools. According to Goldring, the formula can’t stop this cycle.

State championship-winning school districts attract kids because of their winning culture.

According to Babinec, the modern high school sports culture is oriented to success and individual opportunities.

“I think the mindset has changed at the high

school level. It used to be a chance to play with your friends, kids you’ve grown up with your whole life, and put on a jersey that represents your community,” Babinec said. “Now this doesn’t matter as much. I think it’s about wanting to get scholarships, wanting to put yourself in the position, individually, to be seen and play for a certain coach.”

A popular public school belief, reinforced every time private schools dominate state championships, is that private school athletics are superior because private schools recruit athletes.

Neither private nor public schools are allowed to recruit athletes.

In bylaw 4-9 of the OHSAA Handbook, section one states that “any attempt to recruit a prospective student-athlete for athletic purposes is strictly prohibited.”

However, there are two specific exceptions to this bylaw.

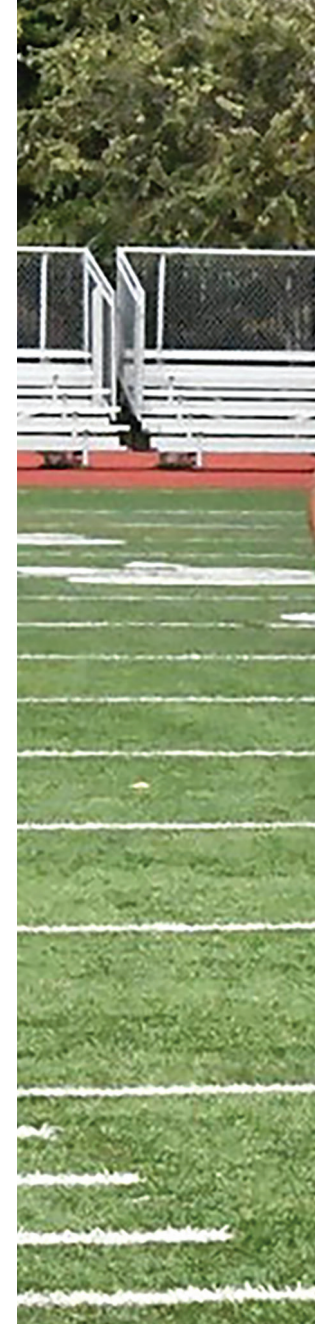
First, coaches from a public high school are allowed to contact students in grades seven and eight who currently attend a middle or elementary school within that school district.

According to the OHSAA, the rationale behind this exception is that “those seventh-eighth grade students are already enrolled within that public school district and thus it should be permissible for coaches in that district to contact them concerning athletic participation.”

The second exception is that private school coaches are allowed to contact athletes within their feeder schools or district zones.

The handbook also states that “marketing with a solely athletic focus, regardless of the mechanism of distribution, is prohibited.”

St. Ignatius senior and former hockey player Will Sauerland, who attended Shaker schools from





kindergarten to eighth grade, said that there was no recruiting process for him.

“Once they heard that I was interested in coming there, they came to one of my games and that was it,” Sauerland said.

Private school sports might be superior just because of the winning cultures they build. A successful, championship-winning athletic program is a recruiting tool in itself.

Who wouldn’t want to play for the best high school and have a chance at winning a state championship every year? The success of private school sports might be the reason they draw athletes from outside their feeder zones, not illegal recruiting.

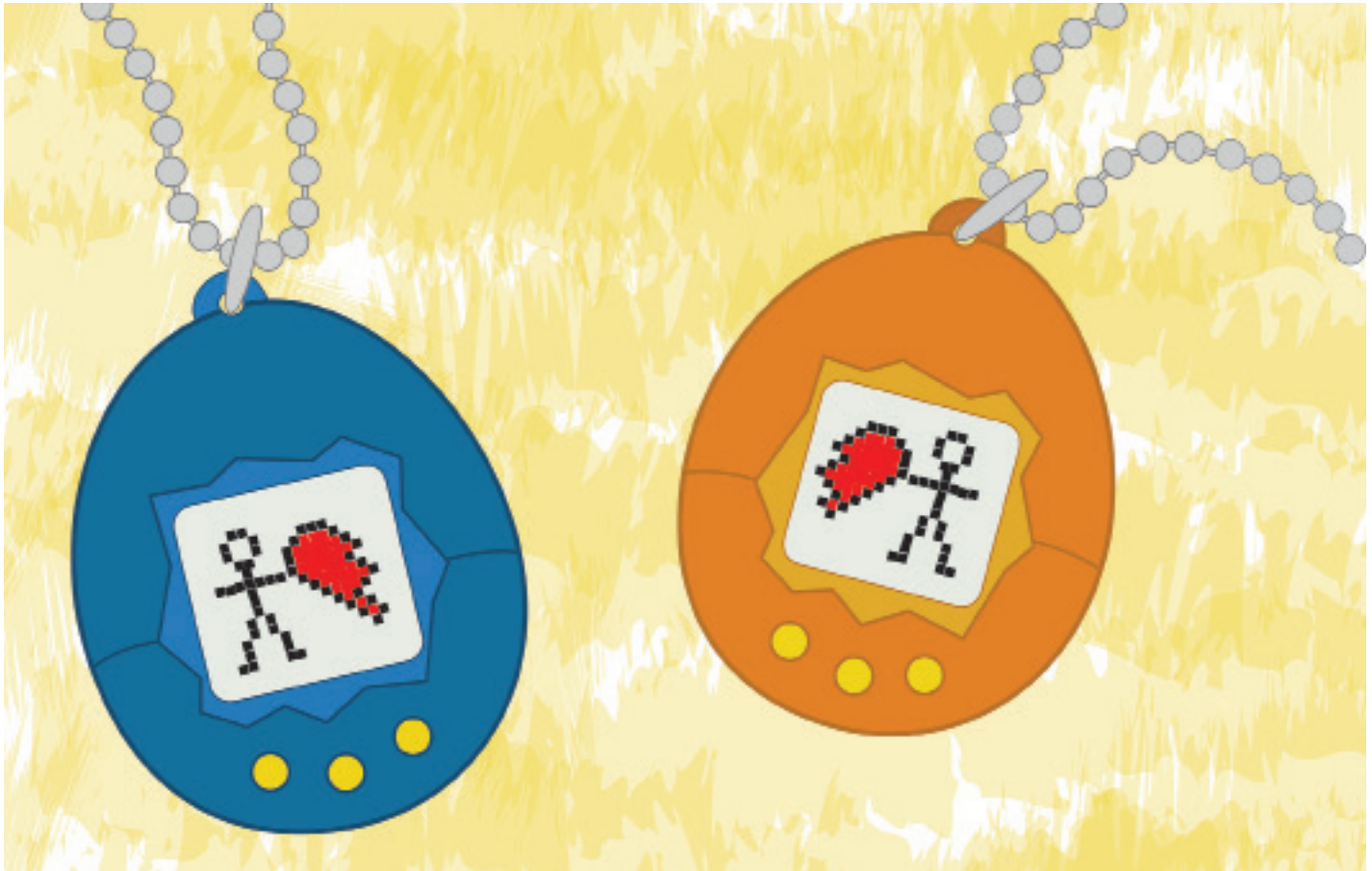
While the competitive balance formula challenges Division II and Division III schools who draw athletes from outside their feeder zones, Division I private schools are untouchable.

They will remain in Division I no matter how many athletes flock to their schools.

So, boys will continue going to St. Ignatius to win Division I state championships. No formula will prevent these powerful private schools from filling their trophy cases with state titles.

Mentor’s adjusted enrollment count of 965 students beats Shaker’s adjusted enrollment of 645 students in a 45-27 Shaker loss. **Photo by Brittany Chay**

WHY HIGH SCHOOL DATING SUCKS



Let's face it, folks: There are pros and cons to being a high schooler. Pro: You're almost an adult; only four more years of hell and then you're free. Con: The stakes for your success are so high that you might as well just be diagnosed with anxiety the moment you become a ninth grader. Pro: You're a big kid now, you get to do big kid things like drive a car, see PG-13 and up movies, stay up later and date. Con: You're going to be seeing a lot of people dating and



Rose Feldman

you're either gonna love it or hate it.

I cannot stand dating in high school. The very idea of it makes me roll my eyes and wish I could keep a spray bottle with me at all times to spritz these cringey lovebirds in the face every time they mention their boy/girlfriend of two weeks and how smart/cute/funny/perfect/whatever they are.

'Why,' you ask? Well, it's simple.

Firstly, it's meaningless. The moment you head to college, I highly doubt you're going to hold onto your high school sweetheart. Hell, very few people hold onto their high school friends, and a significant other is just a friend with PDA.

Secondly, PDA is gross. Stop it. Seriously. Nobody wants to see you two do the tongue tango or let your hand “accidentally” slip down to grab something that’d be considered sexual misconduct in any other situation. Nor does anyone really care about your one month anniversary. Get back to me when you guys hit six months and maybe I’ll congratulate you.

Furthermore, these relationships are so plastic it’s cringey. They all follow a basic formula: “Hey, you don’t wanna be alone. I don’t wanna be alone. We’re basically at the same level of the popularity hierarchy. OMG we’d be such a cute couple!”

After that, you get the first date, something that still dumbfounds me. I mean, what do you do on a first date when you’re a high schooler? Because I certainly have never seen any “couples” at classic dating spots like movie theaters, restaurants or museums.

From there the relationship becomes a mutual Tamagotchi. You’ve gotta feed your significant other, play with them and give them gifts, otherwise they die. Well, not necessarily die, but you’ll be switching your relationship status back from “in a relationship” to “single” real quick. It’s a needless 24/7 job that kids force upon themselves for no good reason other than that they’re either lonely or all their friends are doing it.

This bombardment of couple crap clutters up the lives of not only the couple, but everyone who is in proximity to them. School hallways are littered with so many couples that getting through is like trying to run through a minefield. Social media feeds are congested with couples’ spam.

Selfies together, screenshots, internet memes. It takes up 90 percent of your feed, depending on how many people you’re following are in these sort of relationships, as well as how much they “love” their significant other.

The problem with high school dating — especially regarding social media — is that not only do these couples look forced most of the time, but the constant barrage of couples’ pictures, tags, talk, and idolization of their partner just shows how desperate and insecure these folks really are.

They’re so insecure in themselves or their

relationship that they spew this garbage, hoping it makes it better.

Don’t even get me started on breakups. Dear. God. High school breakups can be some of the messiest and most drama-saturated events you encounter in your life. The name-calling, the screenshots, games of telephone, on-again-off-again couples, the whole thing is just a mess.

Now, I’m not bashing high school dating just for the sake of bashing it. I will admit that high school dating does have some merits amidst all of the bull that comes with it.

As irritating as it can be, it does help teenagers gain experience in relationships. Seeing as it is the end of the line for most relationships, as people will be moving away and getting a clean slate, there are minimal consequences to dating someone in high school.

You could compare it to the tutorial round in a videogame — you get a hold on the basics and the mechanics, and regardless of whether you pass or fail it, you are not penalized harshly (if at all).

This, along with the fact that it gives momentary gratification and enjoyment, basically encompass all the merits that high school dating has to offer. Otherwise, it is just a pain in the tuckus for everyone.

And don’t think that this is just me talking either. A lot of people agree that high school dating sucks. Just Google “High School Dating” and you will see article after article of people saying much the same as me (once you scroll past those cheesy teen mag sites).

A couple weeks back I discussed this same topic with a psychotherapist I know and what he said only validated my thoughts. He told me that he’s had his fair share of teenage clientele who sought his services just to deal with high school dating drama.

Bottom line: If you think you’re a high schooler and you suspect you’re infected with the “love bug”, I suggest picking this article up again, re-reading it, and then moving on.

Save yourself some time, money and heartache by reminding yourself, “Why High School Dating Sucks.”

